

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • PLASCENCIA

INVINCIBLE™



VOLUME FOURTEEN

THE ULTRUMITE WAR



image COMICS PRESENTS

INVINCIBLE™

THE ULTRUMITE WAR



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image®



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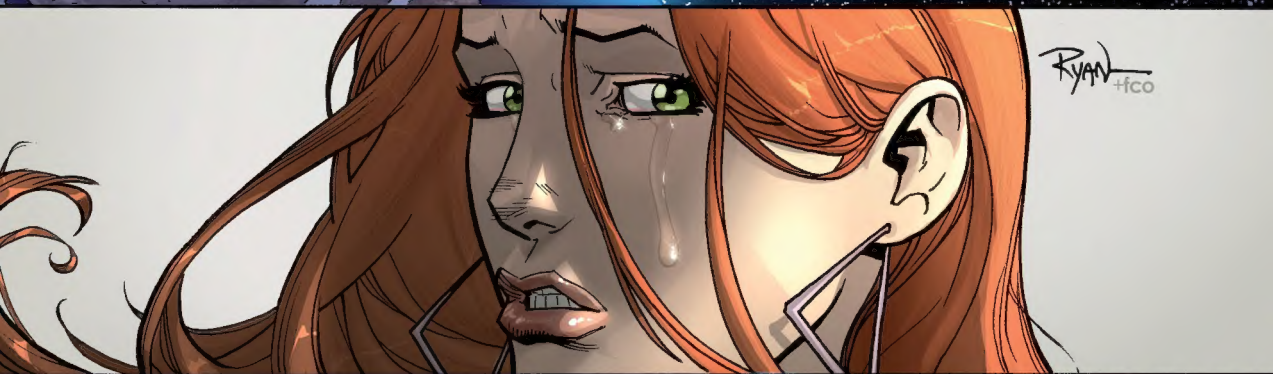
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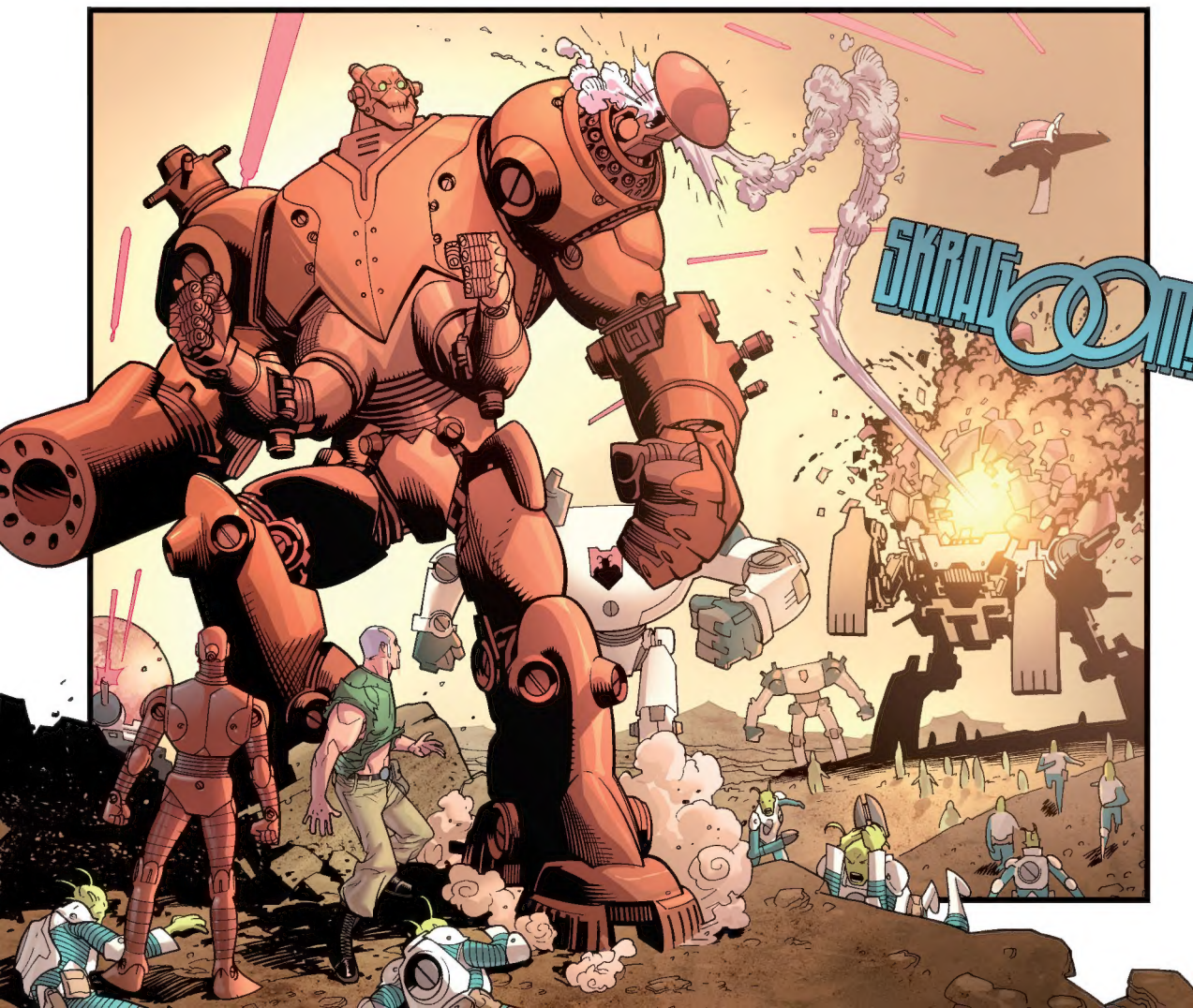
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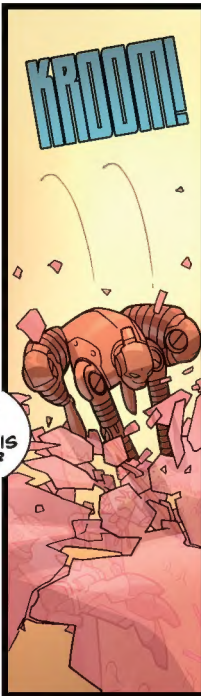
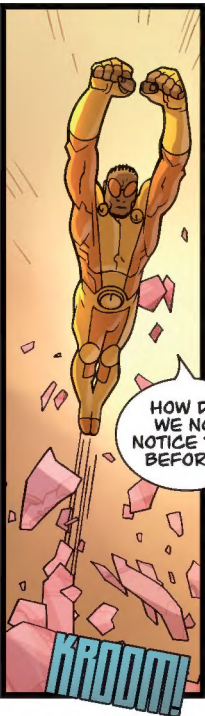
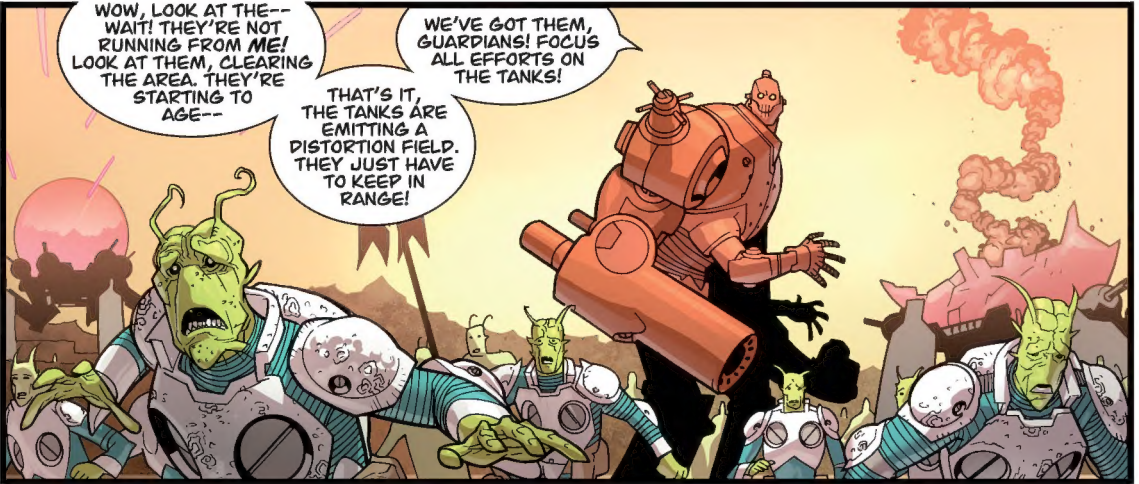
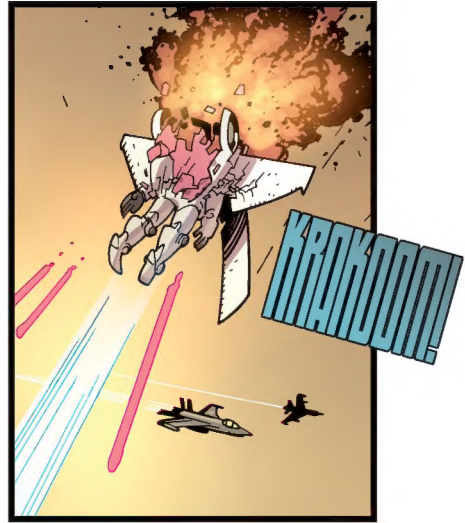
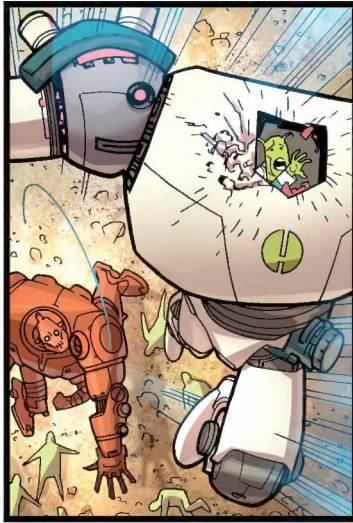


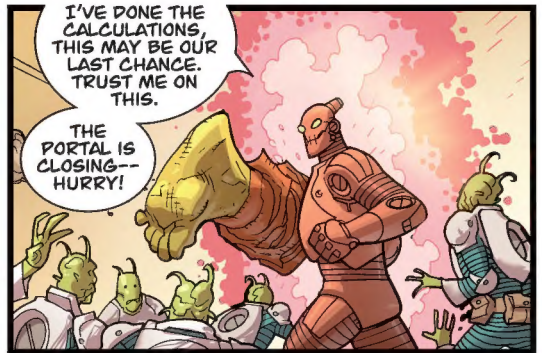
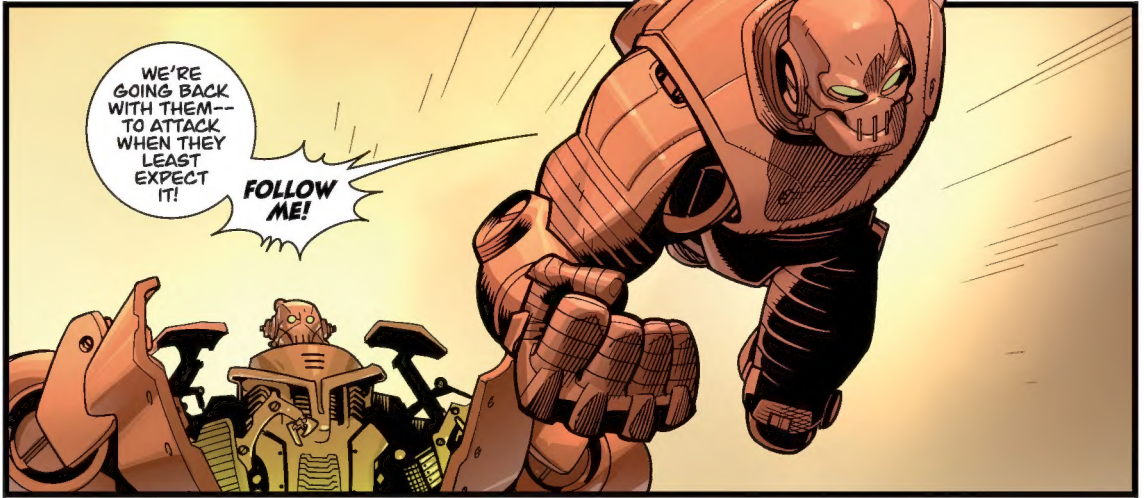
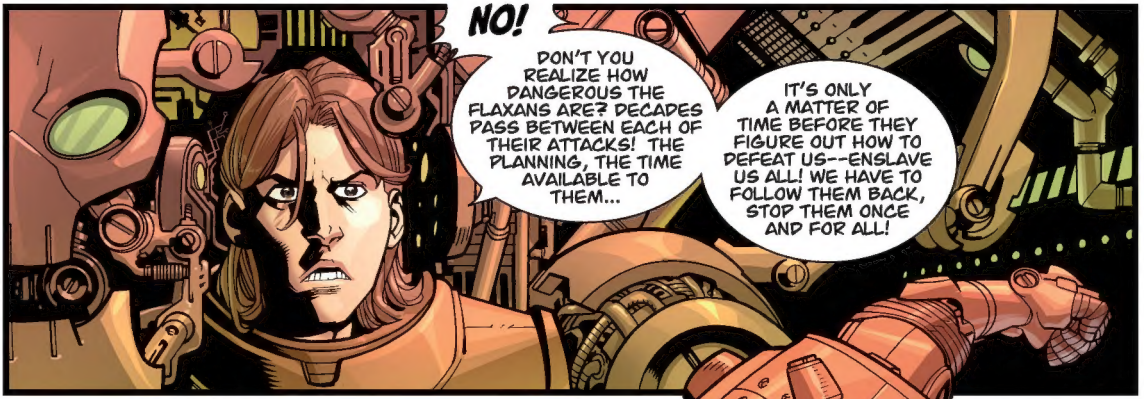
Ryan
+fco















WHAT ABOUT YOUR WIFE? YOU'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO SEE HER WHILE YOU'RE HERE?

I COULDN'T. I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I'VE PUT HER THROUGH SO MUCH... LET'S JUST FIND THIS BOY AND GET OFF THIS PLANET.

TOO MANY BAD MEMORIES.

WELL, I CERTAINLY DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD TAKE THIS LONG TO FIND THIS TECH JACKET EITHER. HE AND HIS FAMILY JUST DISAPPEARED AT SOME POINT A WHILE BACK.

I WAS ABLE TO DISCOVER THIS HOUSE, OWNED BY THE BOY'S GRANDFATHER. MAYBE HE'LL KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE, IF WE DON'T FIND HIM HERE--I DON'T CARE HOW POWERFUL THE GELDARIANS SAID HE WAS--WE'RE LEAVING WITHOUT HIM.

UNDERSTOOD.

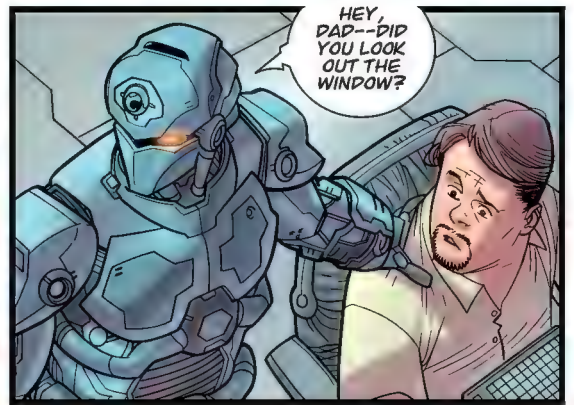
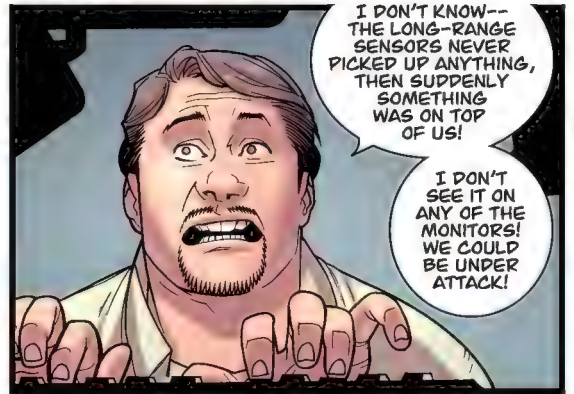
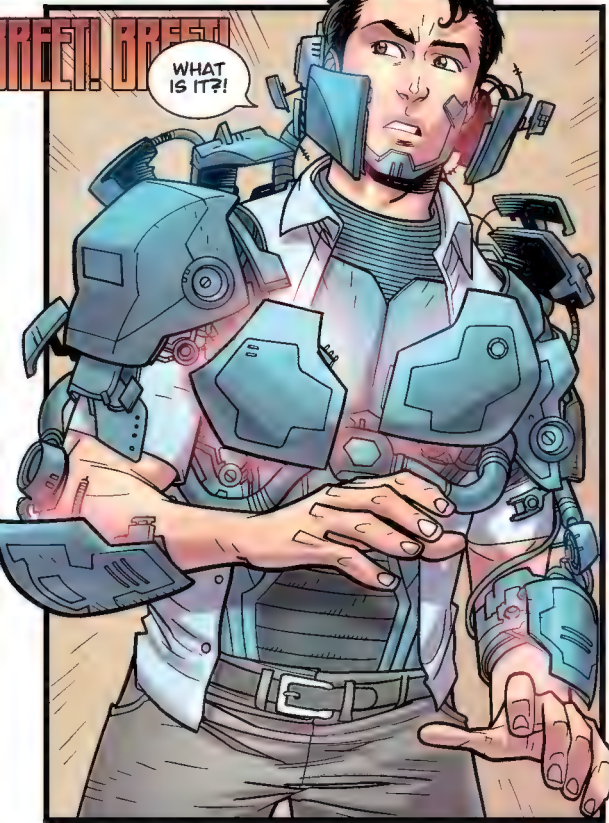
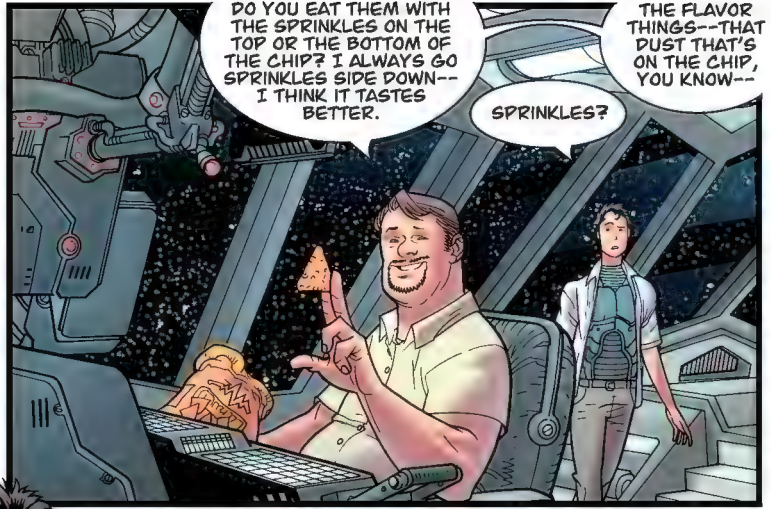
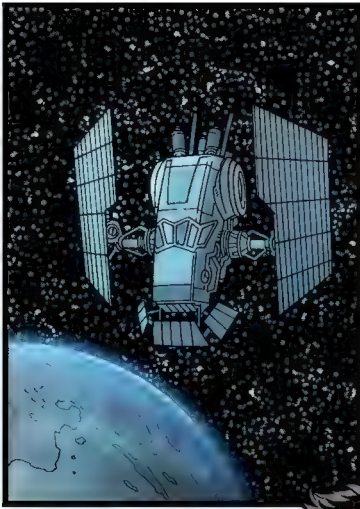
YOU LOOKING FOR THE THOMPSON BOY? CALLS HIMSELF TECH JACKET? WHAT AM I SAYING--OF COURSE YOU ARE.

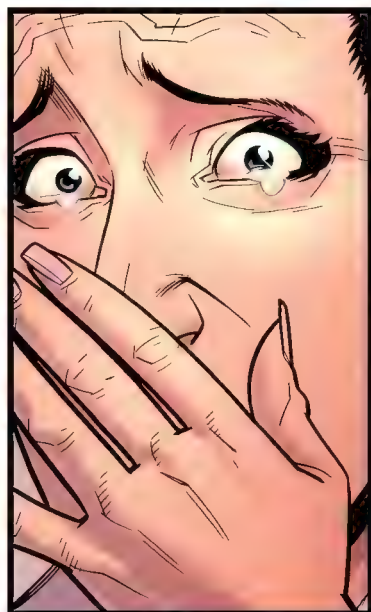
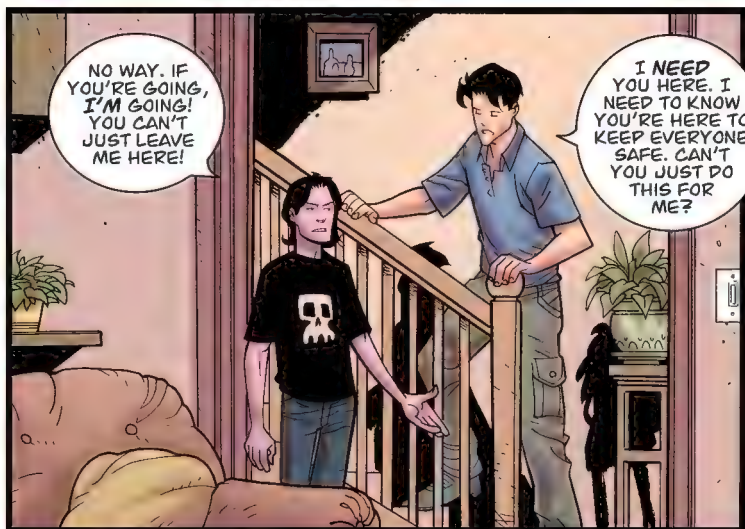
HE'S PROBABLY UP IN HIS SPACE STATION. THEY DON'T SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN THE HOUSE.

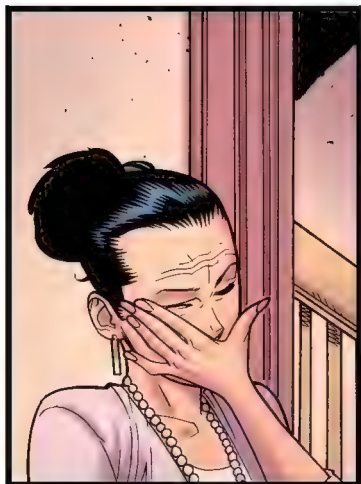
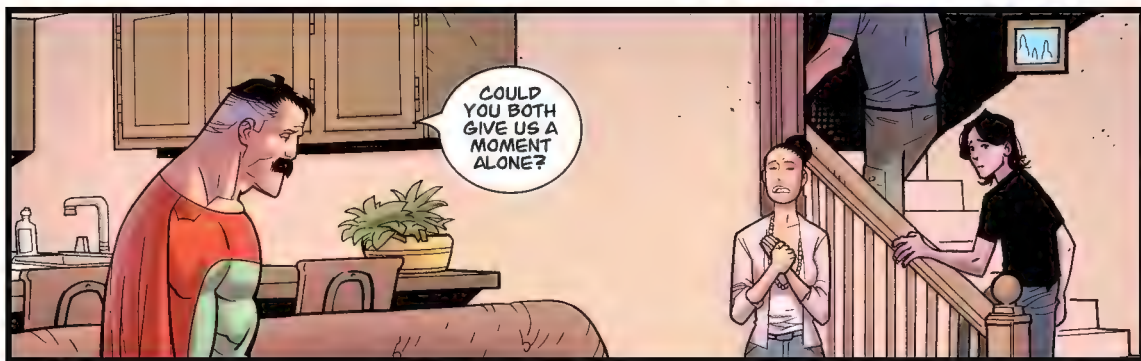
OUR APPEARANCE DOESN'T ALARM YOU?

SEEN STRANGER, THAT'S FOR SURE...

...AND THE BAD GUYS DON'T KNOCK FIRST.

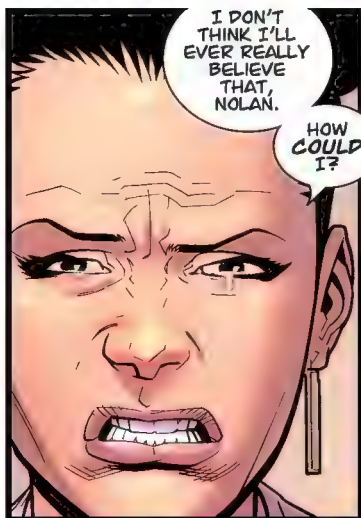
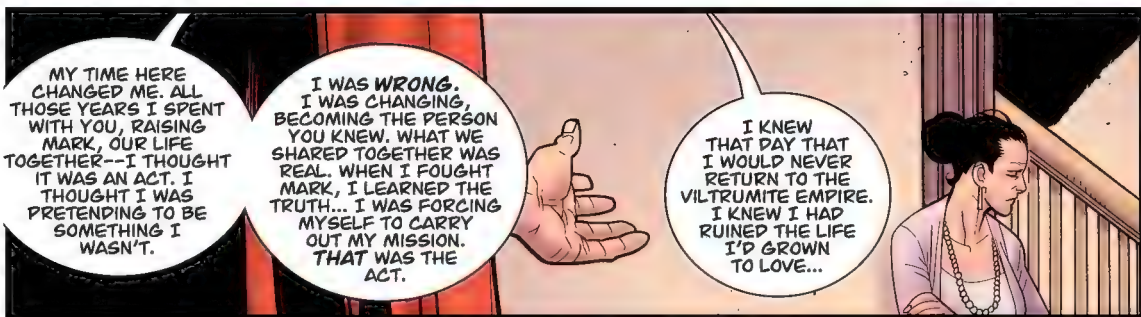


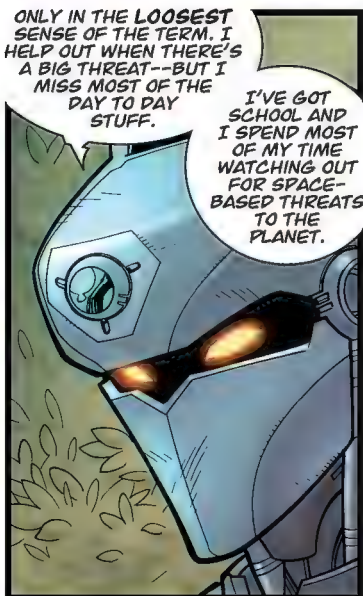
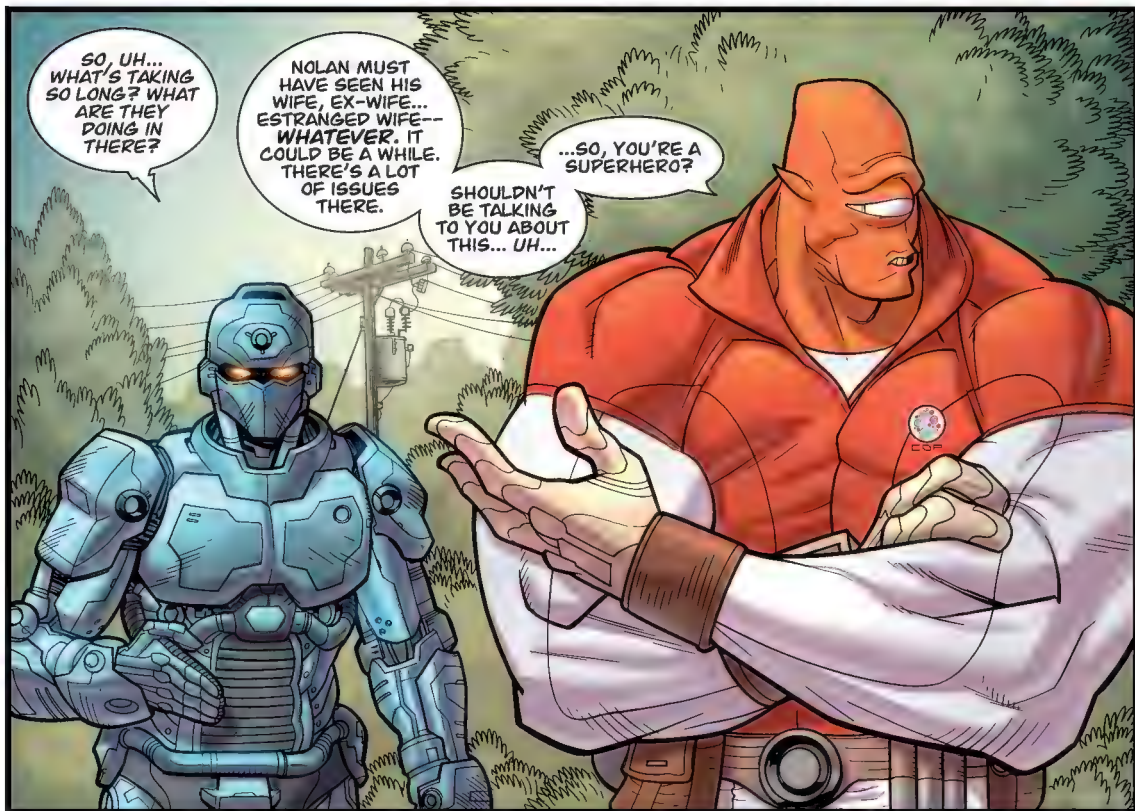


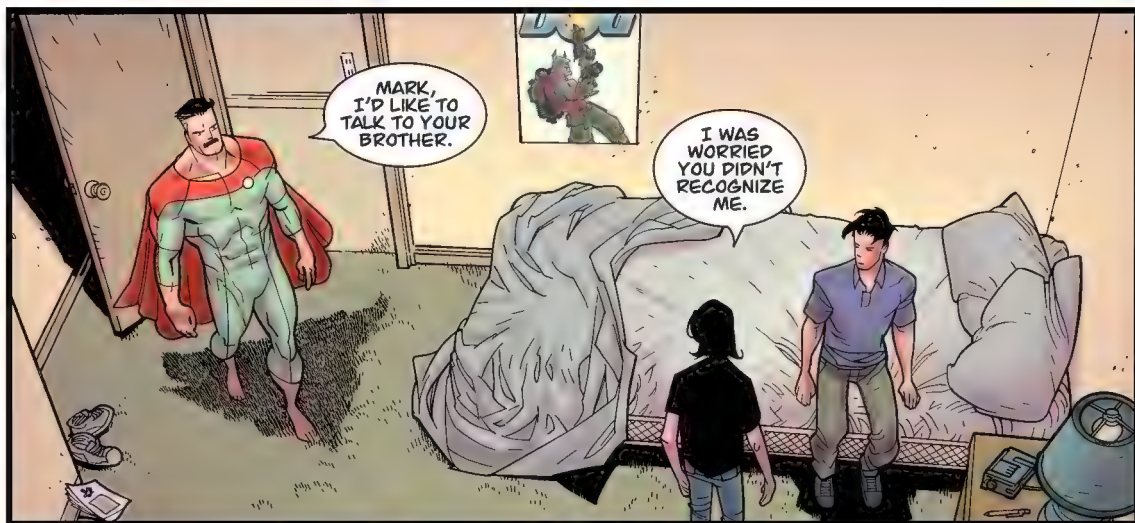


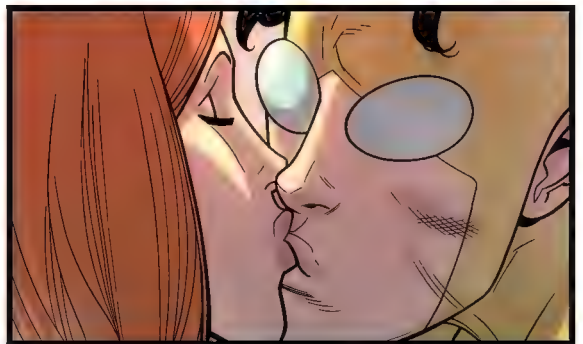
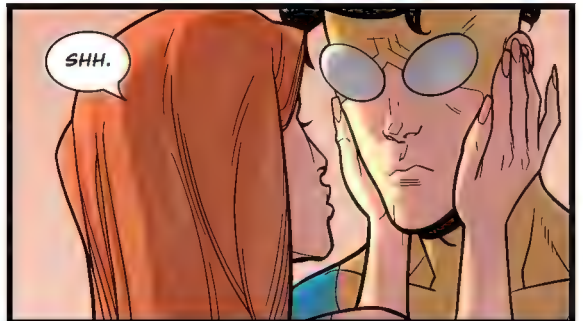
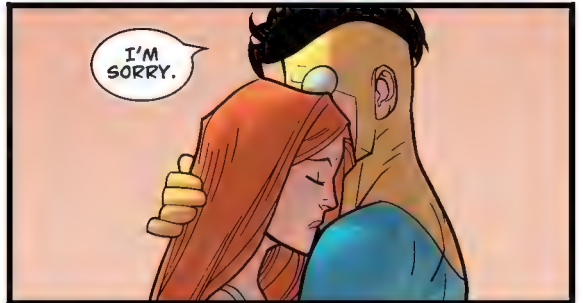
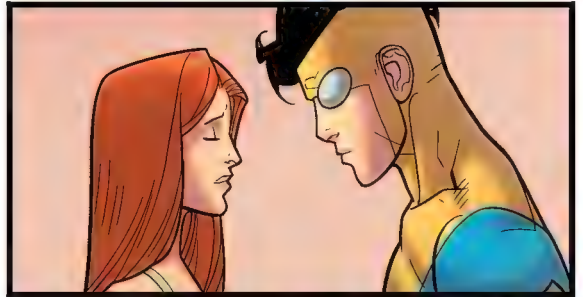
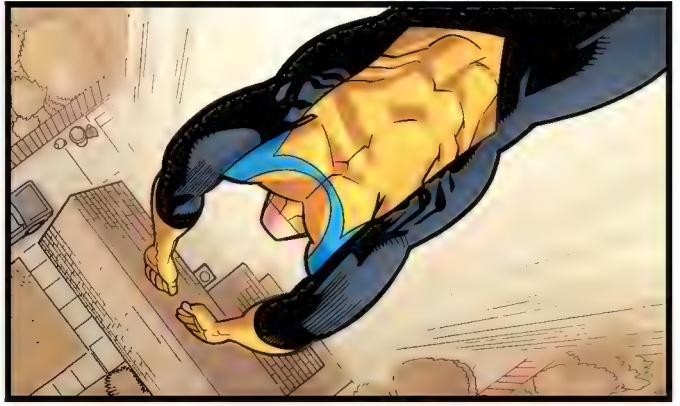
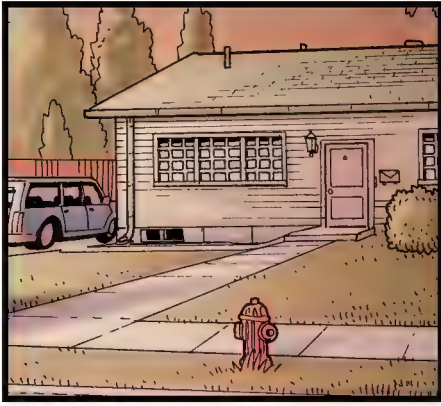
THERE'S NOTHING YOU COULD SAY TO MAKE ME STOP HATING YOU.

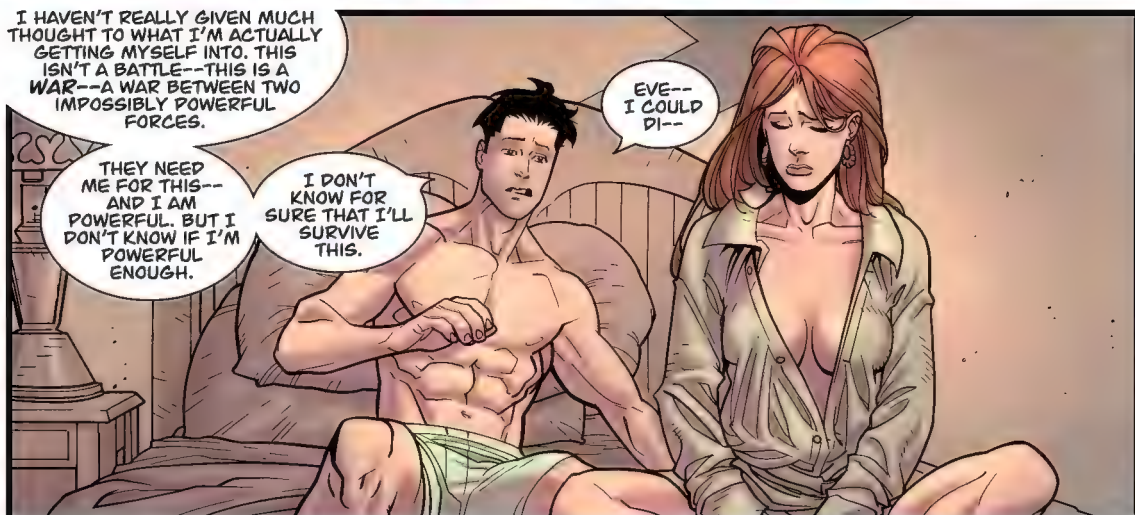
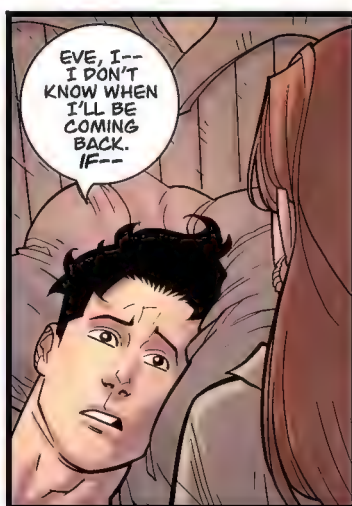
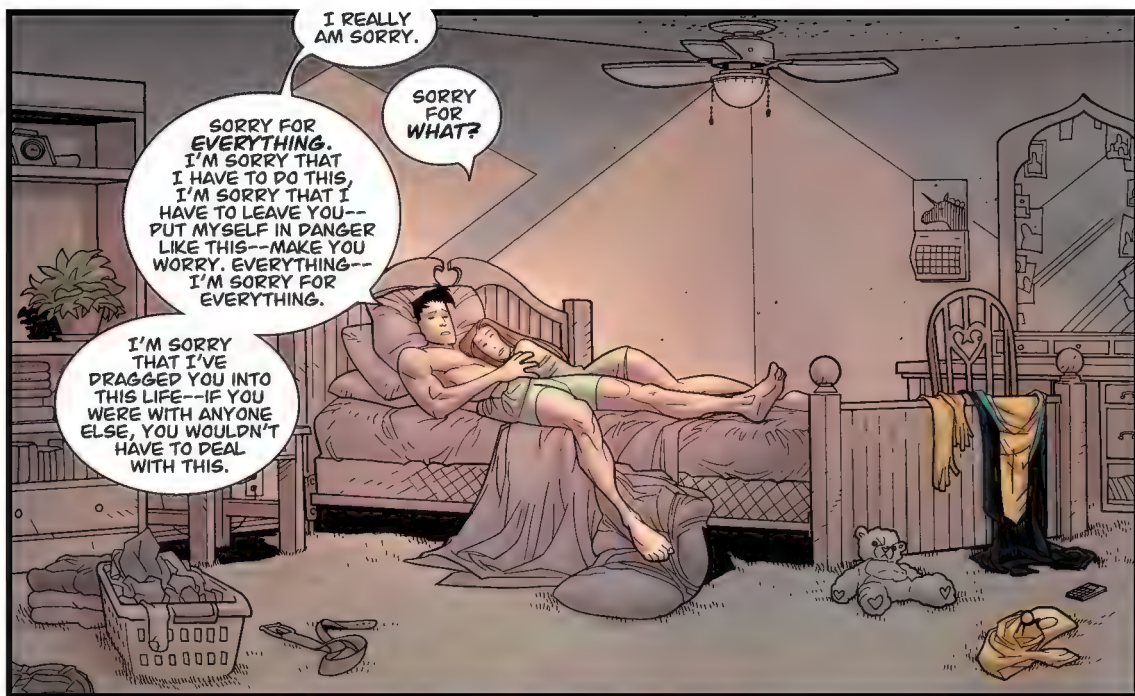
I MEANT NOTHING I SAID THAT DAY.

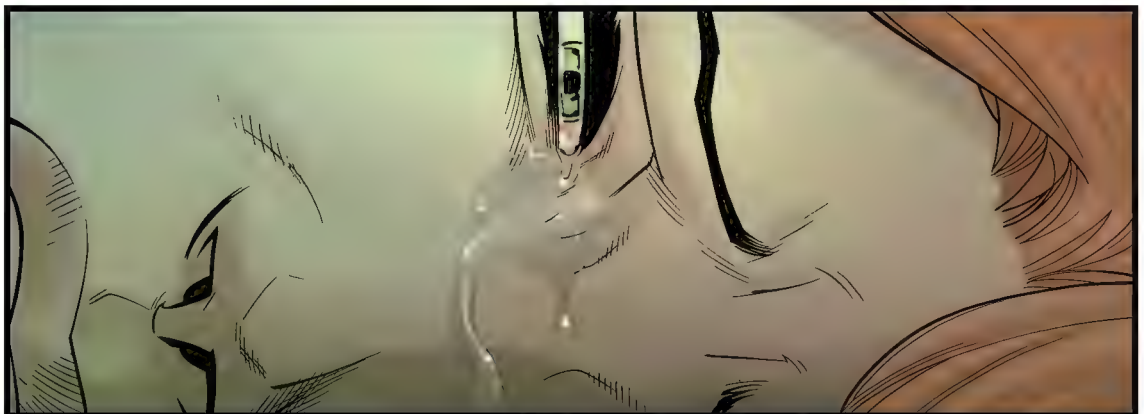
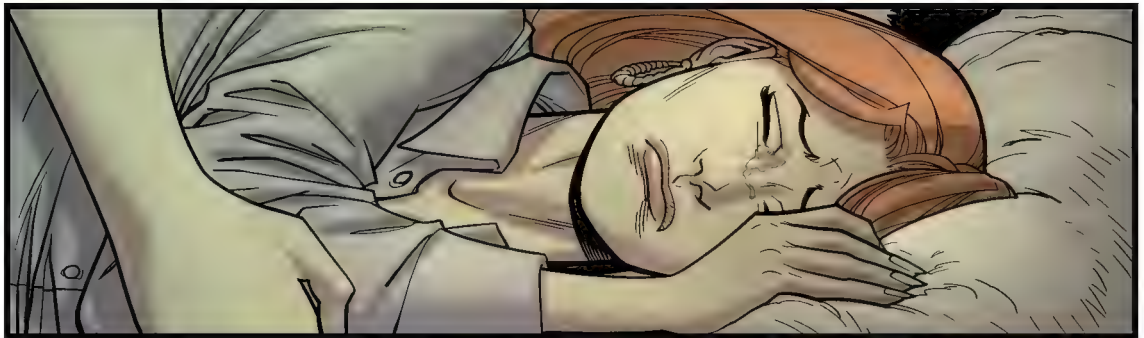
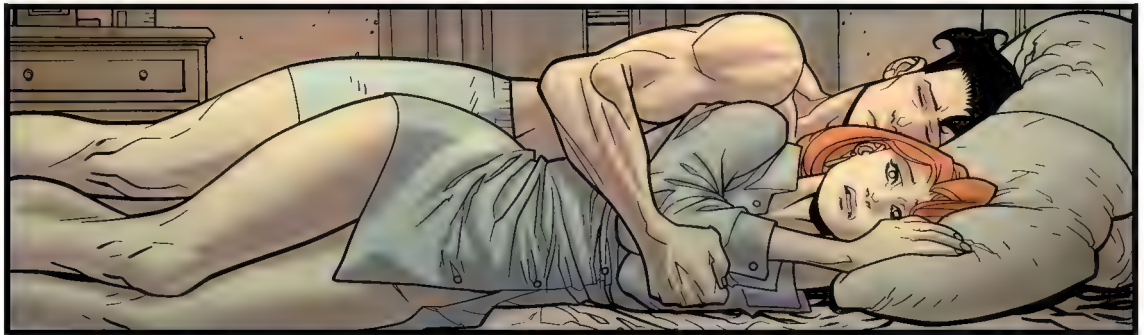


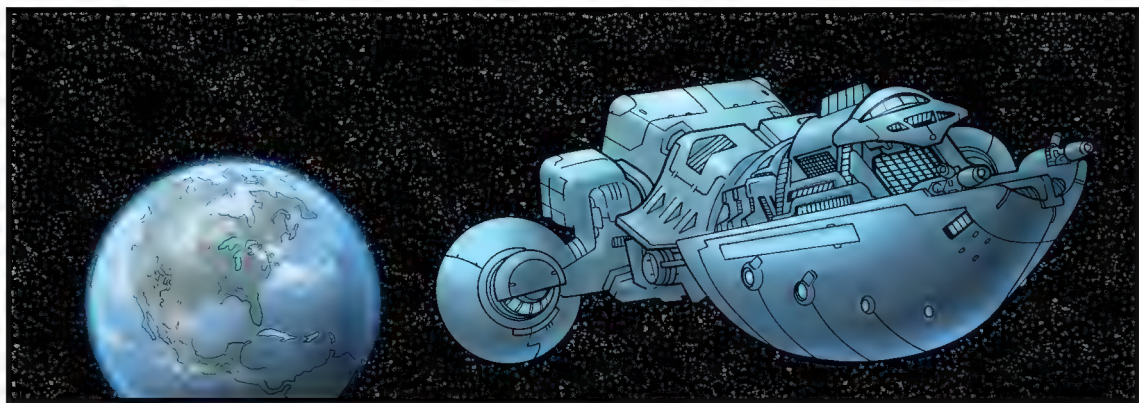












TO BE HONEST, I KIND OF FIGURED WE'D JUST BE FLYING THERE OURSELVES.

I'D RATHER WE HAD. I REQUESTED ANY SHIP BUT **THIS** ONE. THE CREW IS PATHETIC. STILL, EVEN WITH OUR ABILITIES, IT'S DIFFICULT TO TRAVEL THIS KIND OF DISTANCE WITHOUT A SHIP.

WE CAN ONLY HOLD OUR BREATH FOR SO LONG.

TAKE THESE EARPIECES. KEEP THEM IN AT ALL TIMES. IT WILL ALLOW US TO SPEAK TELEPATHICALLY TO EACH OTHER IN SPACE. IT'S SIMILAR TO WHAT ALLEN USES. IF WE DON'T ALL HAVE THEM, THE DISCUSSION ONLY WORKS ONE WAY.

NEAT. ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT THAT.

WAIT, HOW LONG CAN WE HOLD OUR BREATH?

SORRY, I HAVEN'T GOTTEN AROUND TO TEACHING HIM THAT.

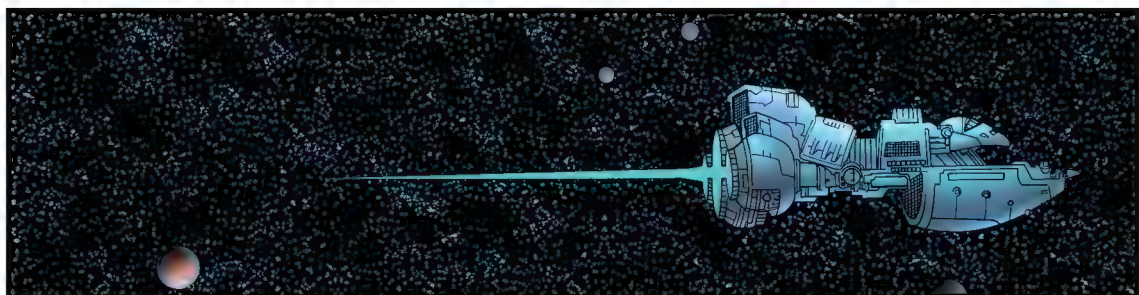
I'VE BEEN A LITTLE PREOCCUPIED AS OF LATE.

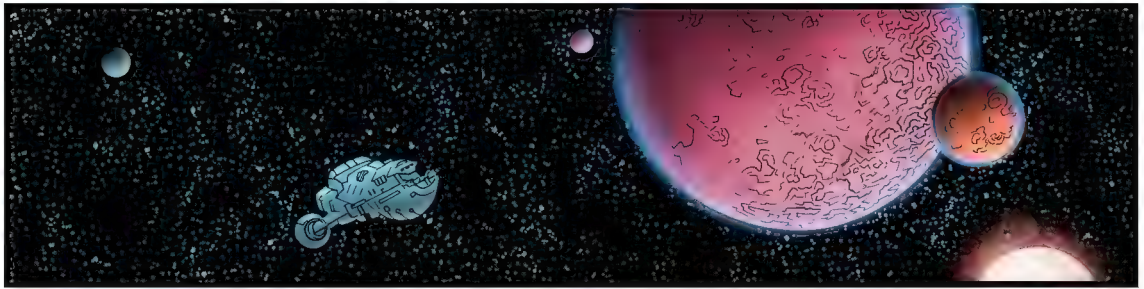
I SAW THAT. SHE'S VERY PRETTY.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT.

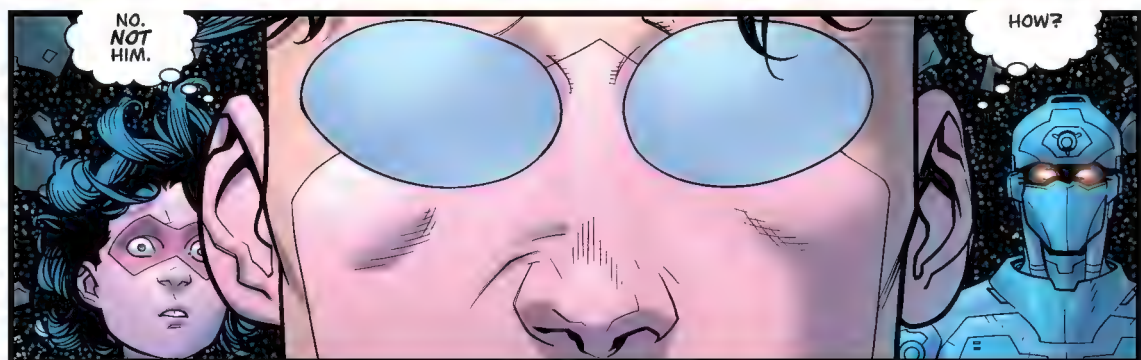
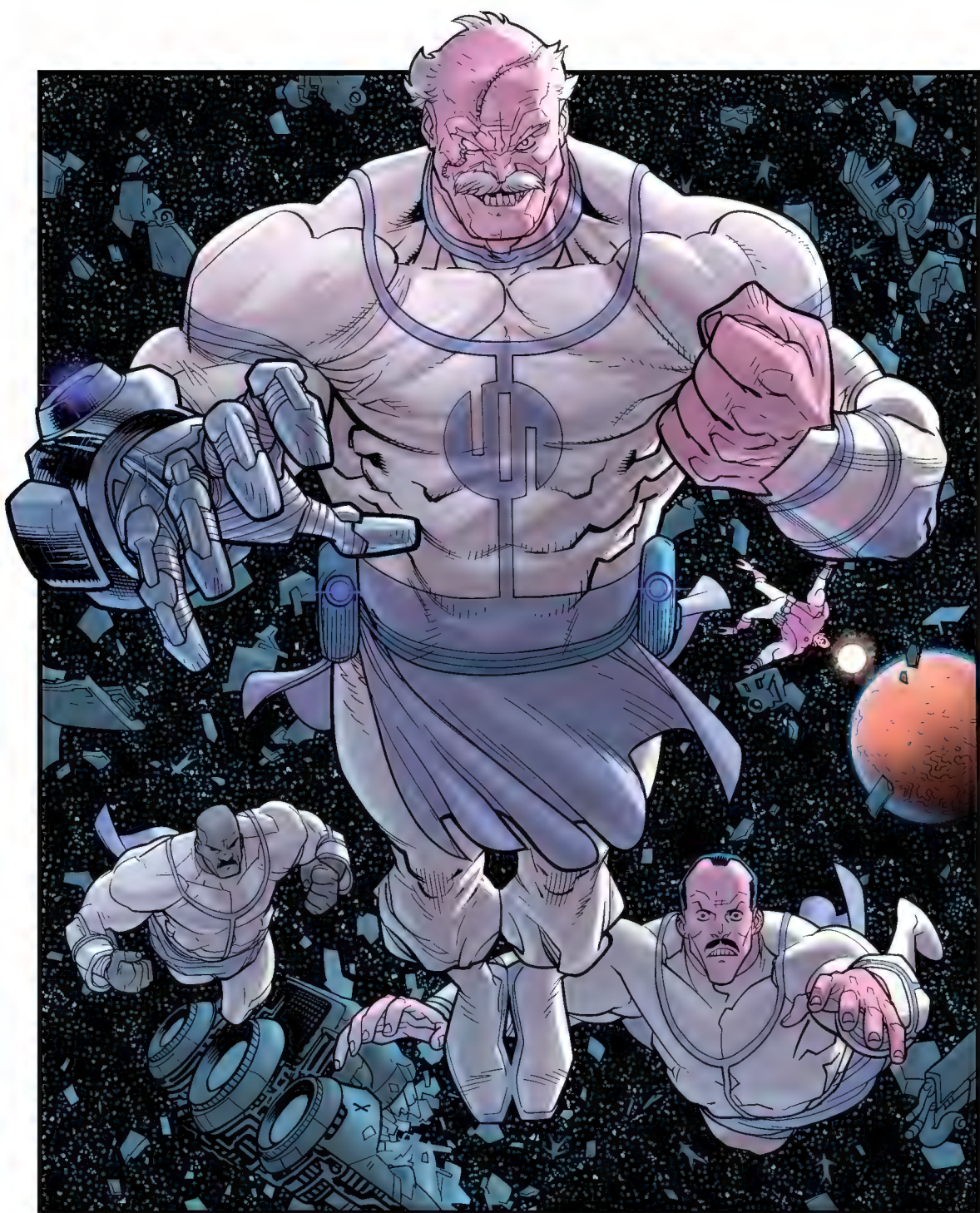
HAH.

SO SERIOUSLY-- I CAN HOLD MY BREATH FOR A LONG TIME?



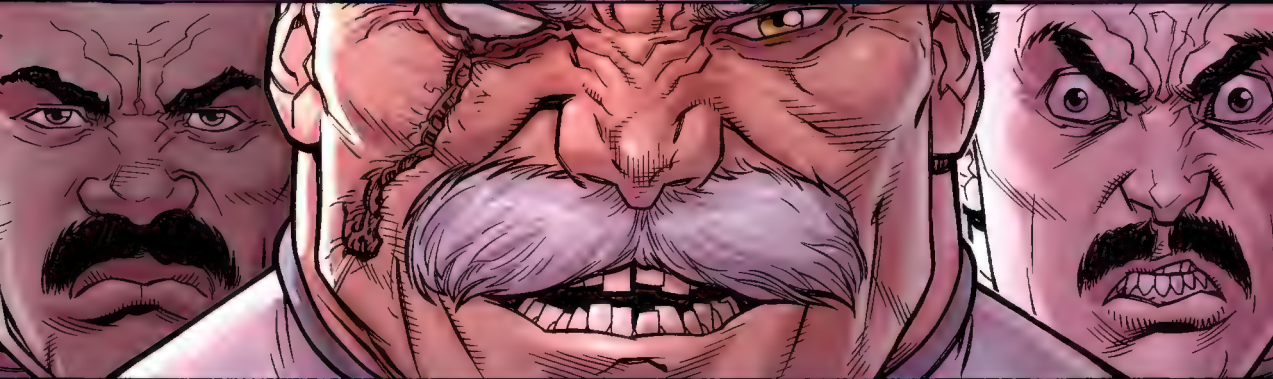


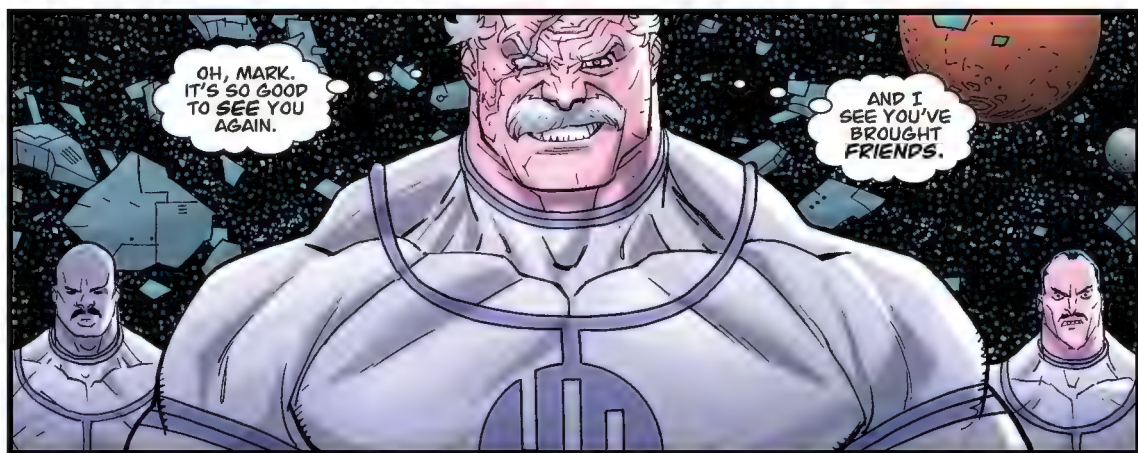






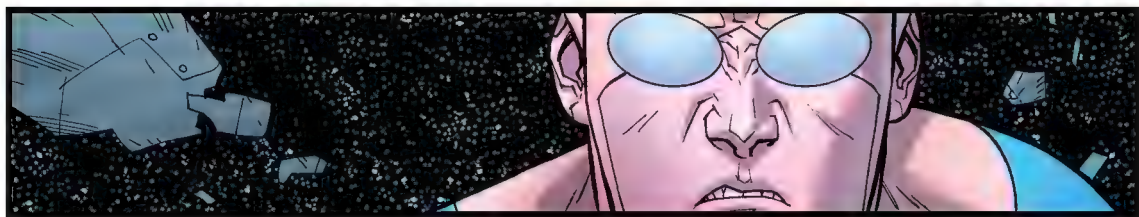
CHAPTER TWO





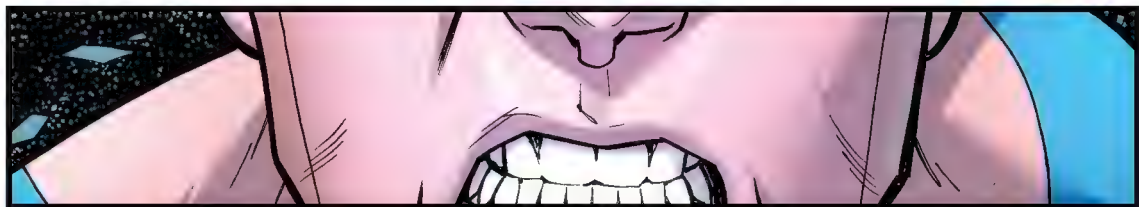
OH, MARK.
IT'S SO GOOD
TO SEE YOU
AGAIN.

AND I
SEE YOU'VE
BROUGHT
FRIENDS.



PUTTING IT ALL ON THE
TABLE, MY ORDERS ARE
SIMPLE. SLAUGHTER
YOU AND EVERYONE
WITH YOU.

I'M SO
HAPPY TO GET
ANOTHER SHOT
AT YOU. I'LL ADMIT
I UNDERESTIMATED
YOU THE FIRST TIME.
I TRUST YOU LEFT
THE GIRL AT HOME
THIS TIME?

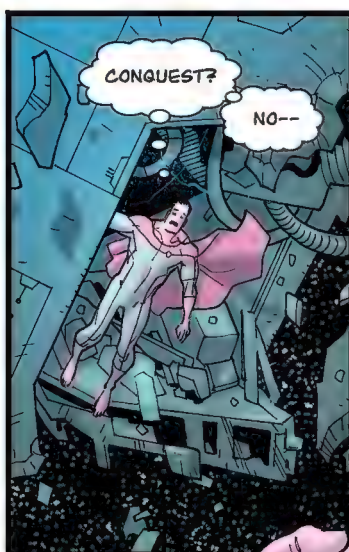


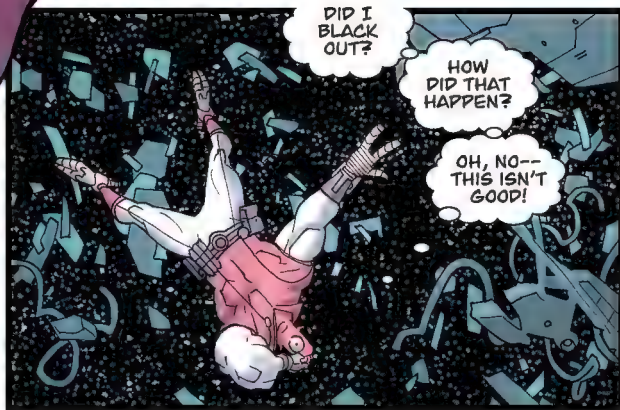
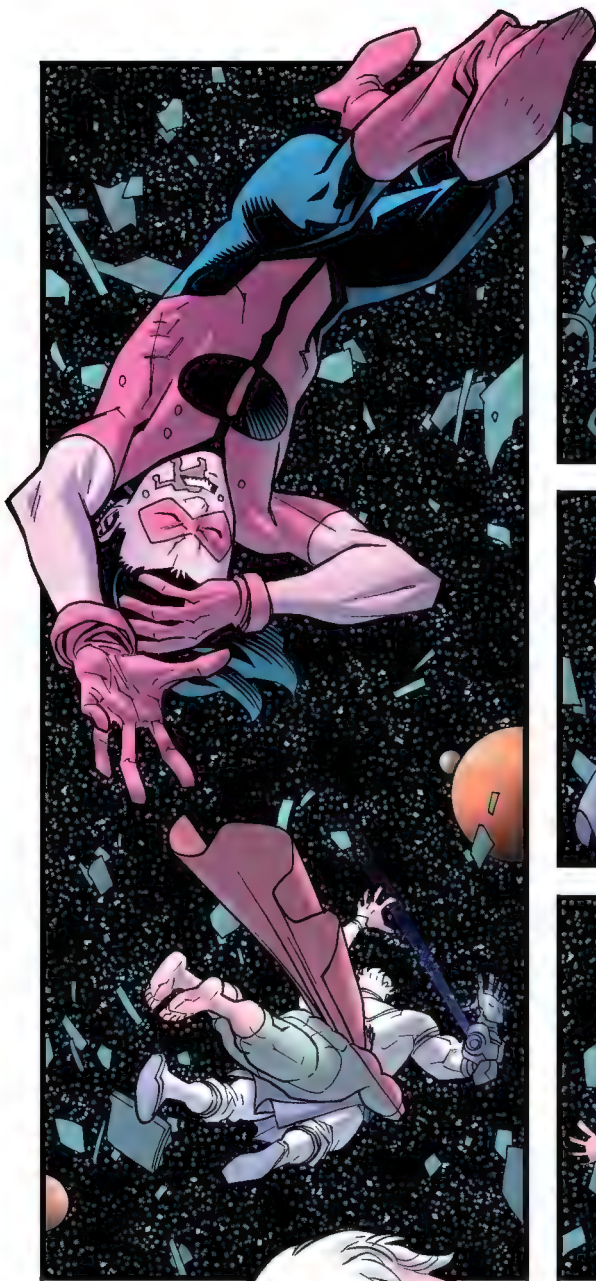
A PITY. YOU'VE BROUGHT ALONG SOME HELP,
WHICH SHOULD MAKE THINGS MORE
INTERESTING. ALTHOUGH, I THINK
YOU'VE **GROSSLY OVERESTIMATED**
THE ABILITIES OF THE GELDARIANS.
THEY NEED THEIR TECHNOLOGY TO
HOLD THEIR HEADS UP. HE'LL
BE **USELESS**.

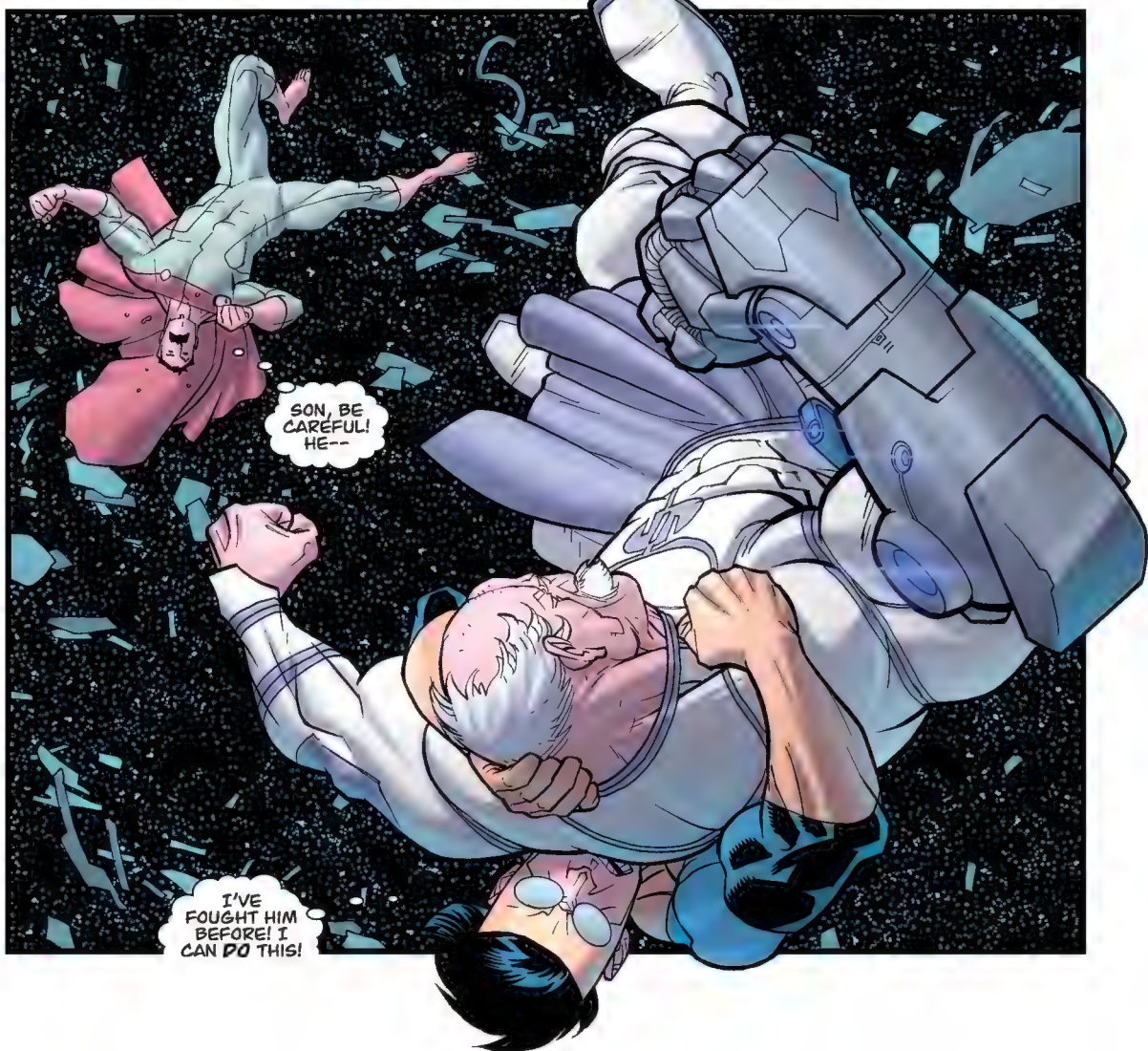
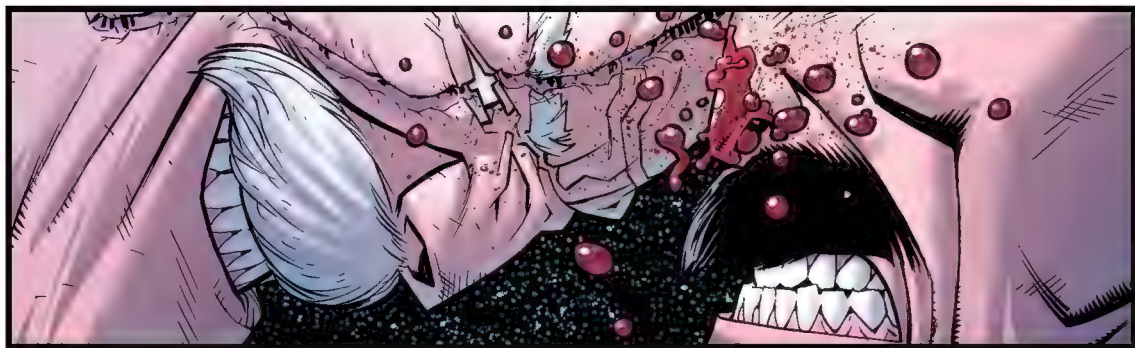
AND THE
BOY, GOOD TO
SEE HIS ARM
HEALED.
I'LL ENJOY
BREAKING IT
AGAIN.

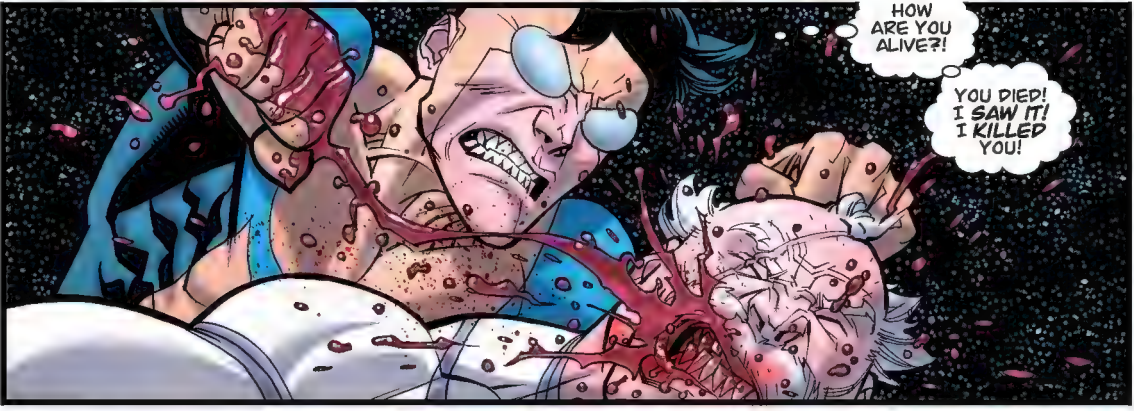
MARK, I
WANT YOU TO
ENJOY THE
SHOW, SO I'LL
BE KILLING
YOU LAST.





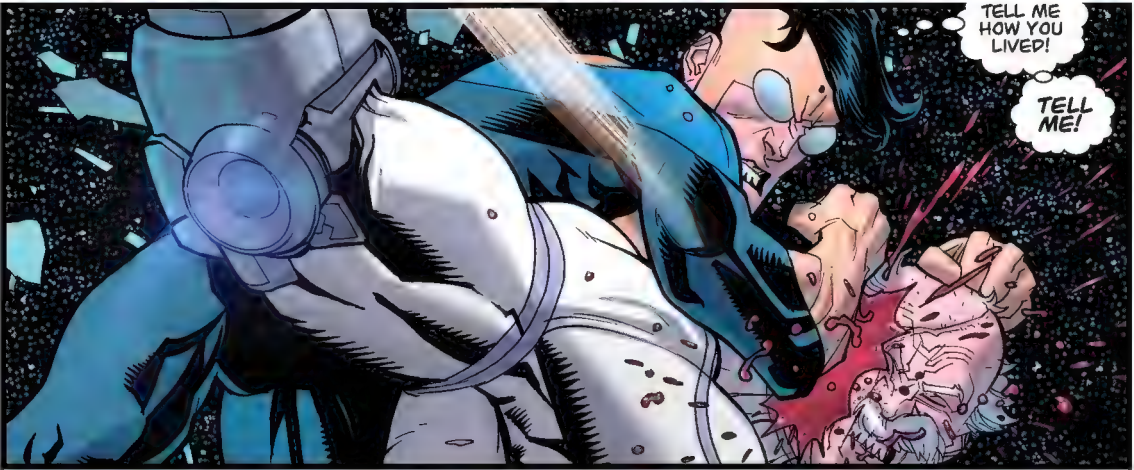






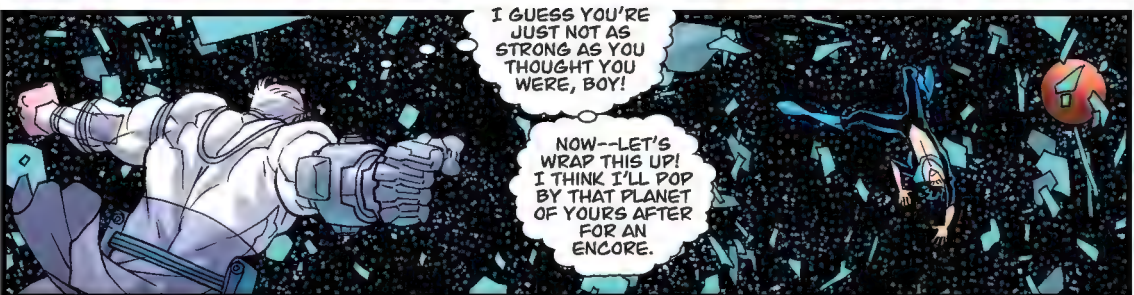
HOW ARE YOU ALIVE?!

YOU DIED! I SAW IT! I KILLED YOU!



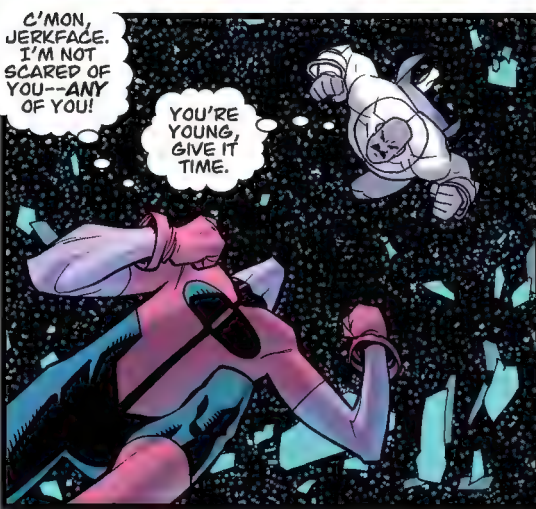
TELL ME HOW YOU LIVED!

TELL ME!



I GUESS YOU'RE JUST NOT AS STRONG AS YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE, BOY!

NOW--LET'S WRAP THIS UP! I THINK I'LL POP BY THAT PLANET OF YOURS AFTER FOR AN ENCORE.



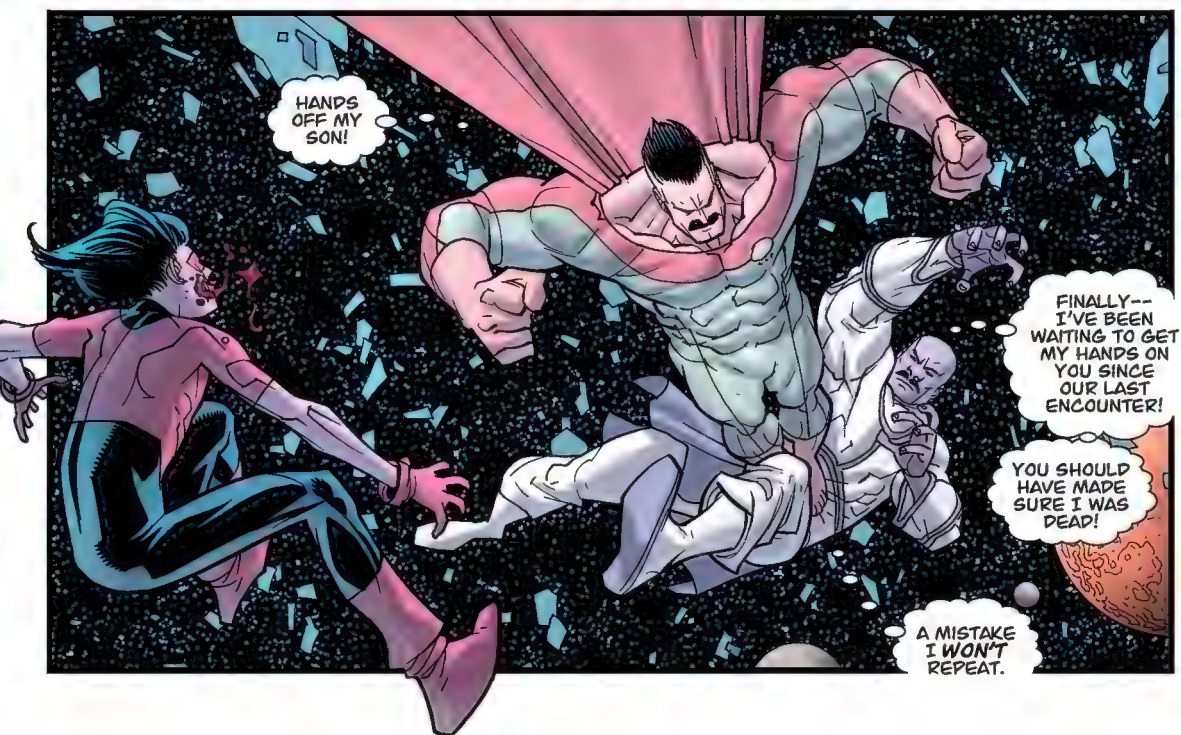
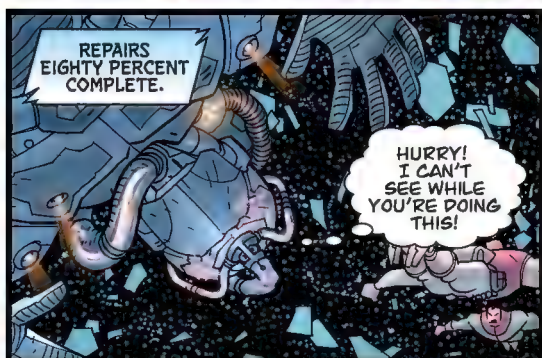
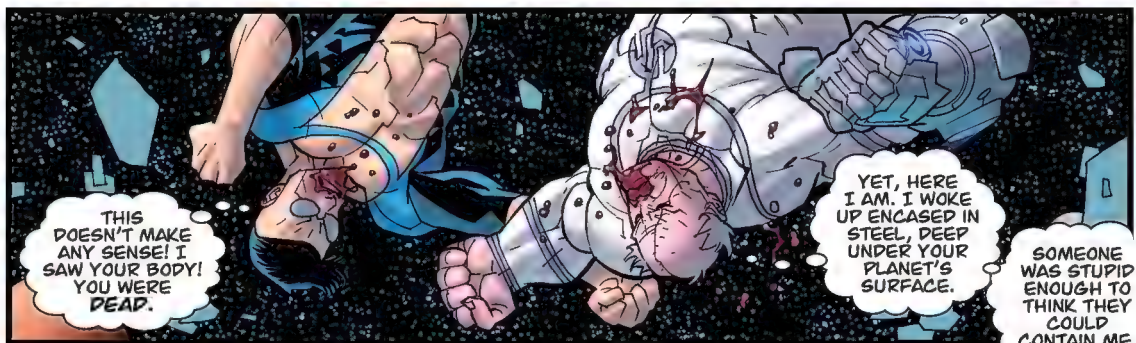
C'MON, JERKFACE. I'M NOT SCARED OF YOU--ANY OF YOU!

YOU'RE YOUNG, GIVE IT TIME.



YOU CAN'T HOPE TO STAND AGAINST OUR EMPIRE IF THESE ARE THE FINEST SOLDIERS YOU CAN FIND.

PATHETIC!





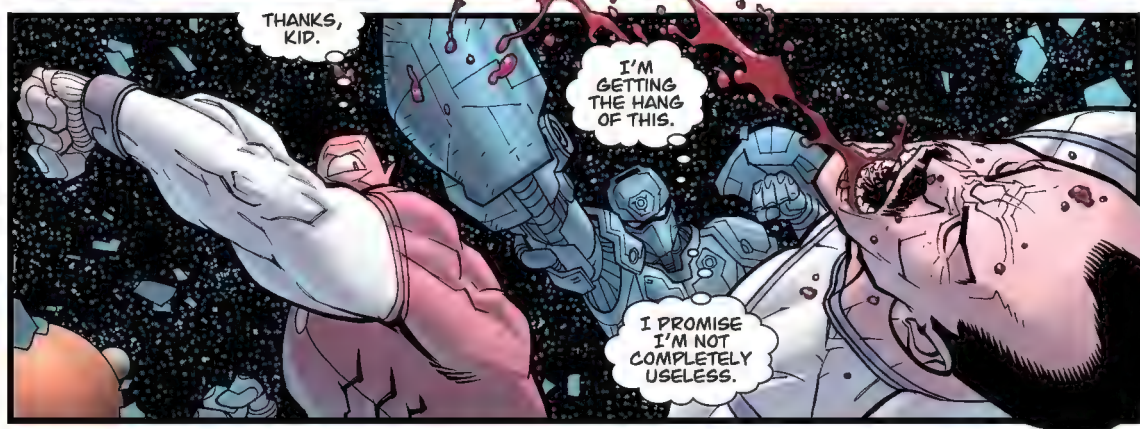
CECIL
KEPT
YOU ALIVE?!
THAT HAS
TO BE IT!

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
HE'D--WHEN
I SEE HIM
AGAIN....!



HOW
OPTIMISTIC
YOU ARE.

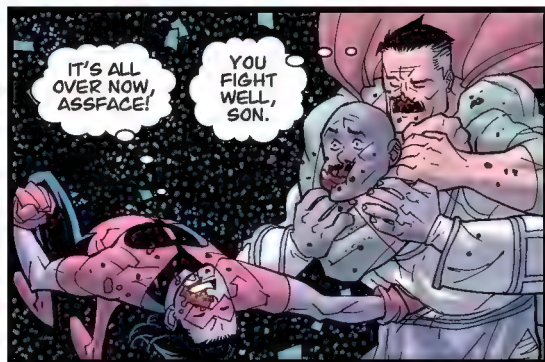
YOU WON'T
BE SEEING
ANYONE
AGAIN!



THANKS,
KID.

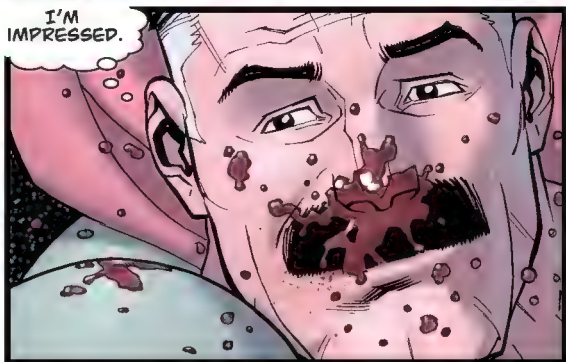
I'M
GETTING
THE HANG
OF THIS.

I PROMISE
I'M NOT
COMPLETELY
USELESS.

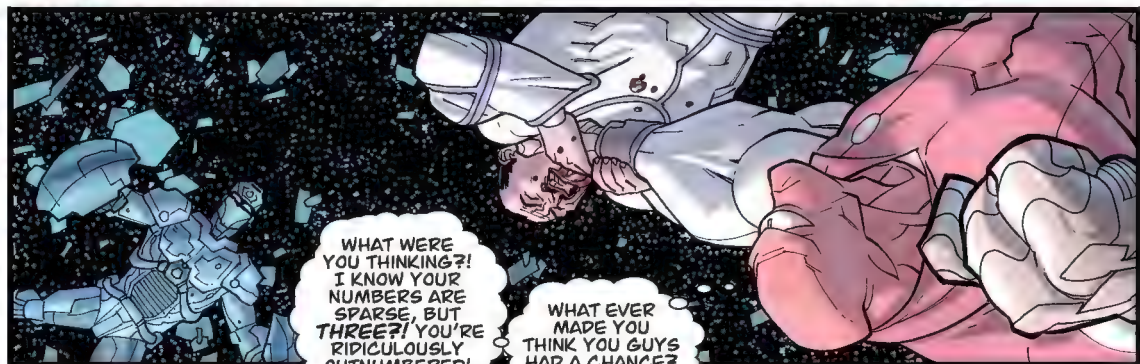


IT'S ALL
OVER NOW,
ASSFACE!

YOU
FIGHT
WELL,
SON.



I'M
IMPRESSED.



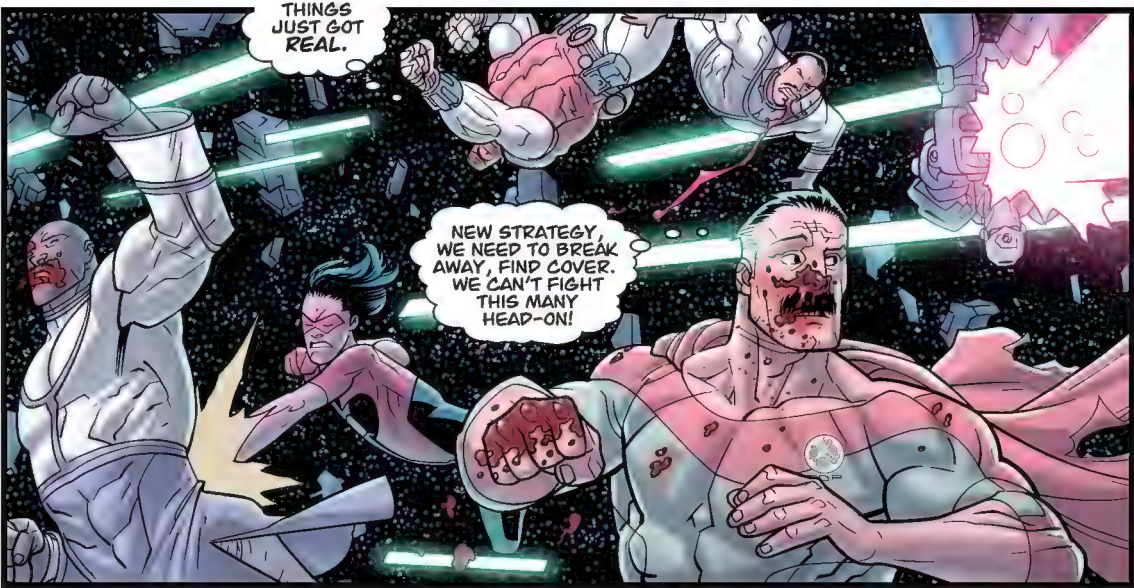
WHAT WERE
YOU THINKING?!
I KNOW YOUR
NUMBERS ARE
SPARSE, BUT
THREE?! YOU'RE
RIDICULOUSLY
OUTNUMBERED!

WHAT EVER
MADE YOU
THINK YOU GUYS
HAD A CHANCE?



NEVER
MIND
THEN.

OH.



THINGS
JUST GOT
REAL.

NEW STRATEGY,
WE NEED TO BREAK
AWAY, FIND COVER.
WE CAN'T FIGHT
THIS MANY
HEAD-ON!



AGH--
STUPID!



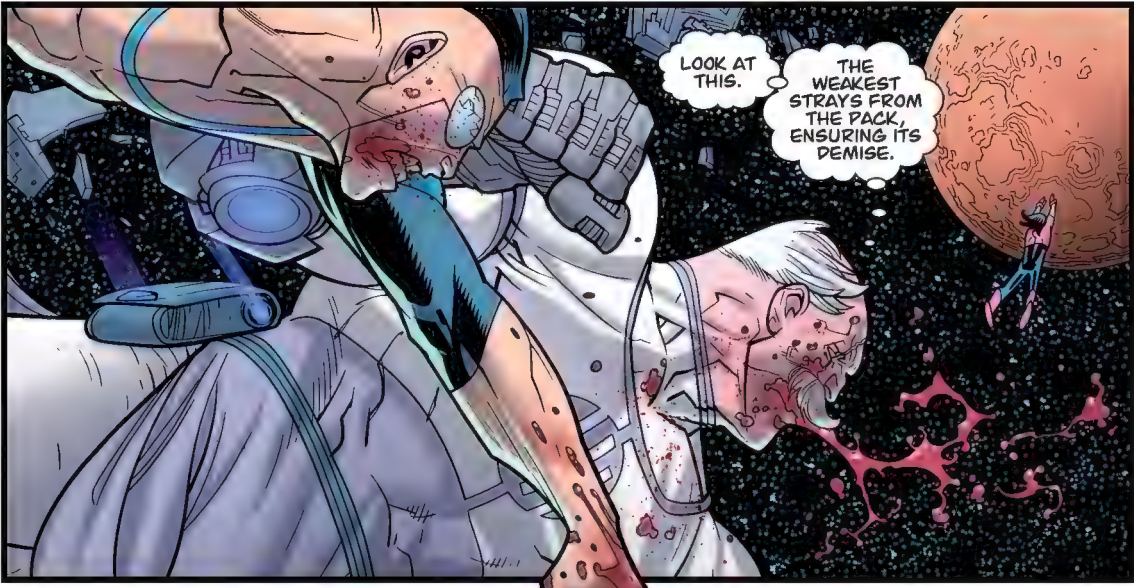
OUT OF
AIR!

CAN'T
BREATHE!



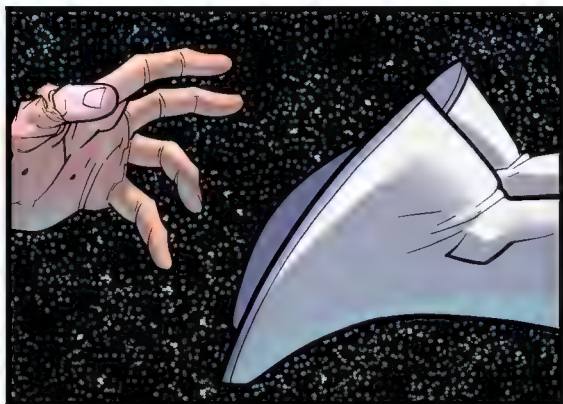
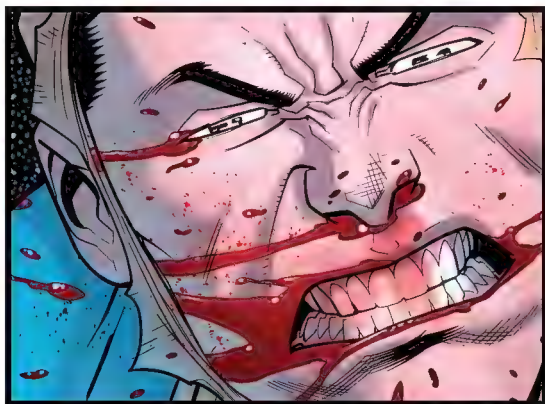
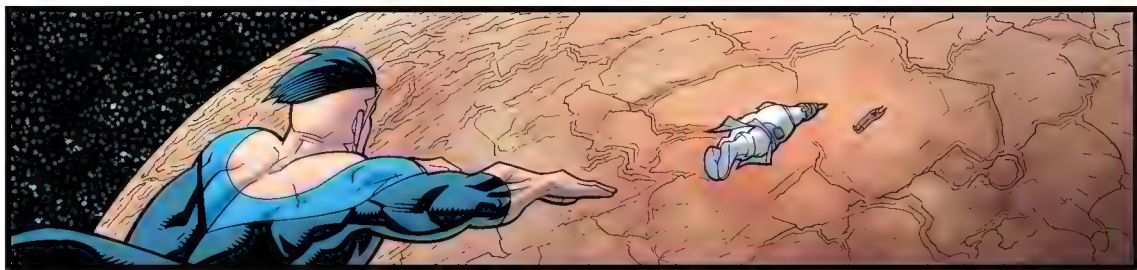
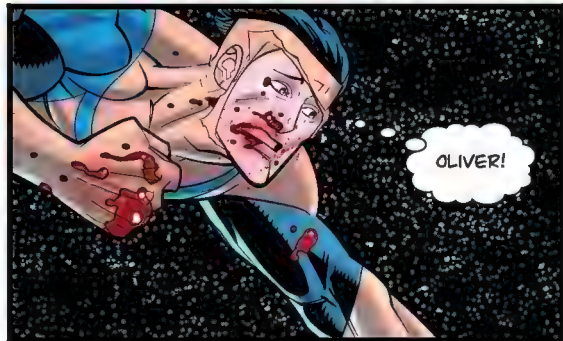
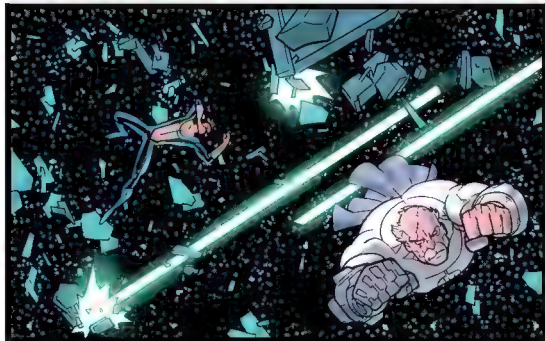
GETTING
LIGHT-
HEADED!
WHAT DO
I DO?!

THE
PLANET WE
PASSED--
GO!



LOOK AT
THIS.

THE
WEAKEST
STRAYS FROM
THE PACK,
ENSURING ITS
DEMISE.

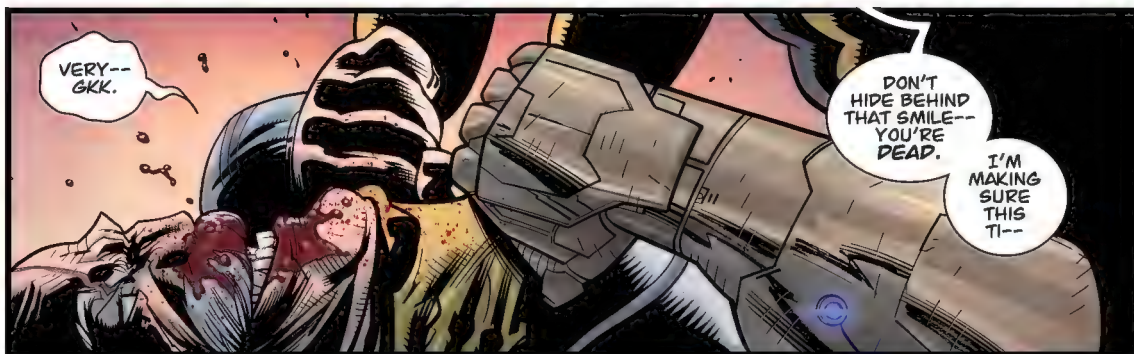






THAT KNOCKED
THE WIND OUT
OF YOU--
DIDN'T IT?

OR DID
YOU JUST
EXHALE KNOWING
THAT YOU WERE
COMING TO THIS
PLANET--AND
COULD GET A
BREATH?



VERY--
GKK.

DON'T
HIDE BEHIND
THAT SMILE--
YOU'RE
DEAD.

I'M
MAKING
SURE
THIS
TI--



KROOOM!



WROKK!

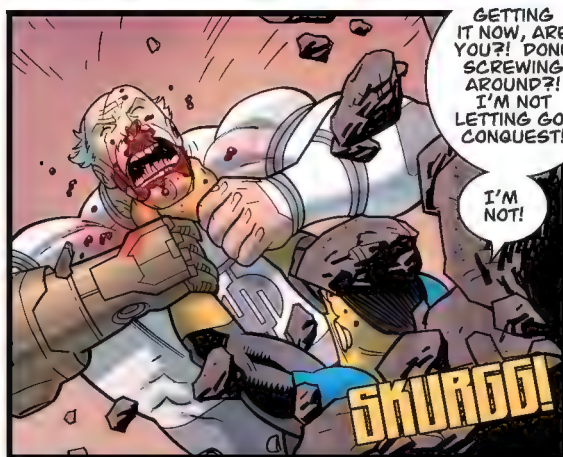
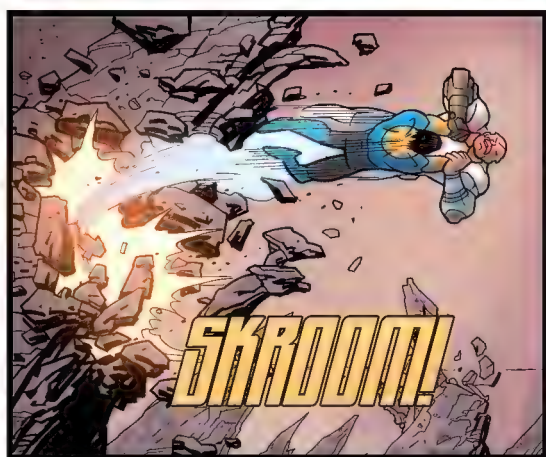
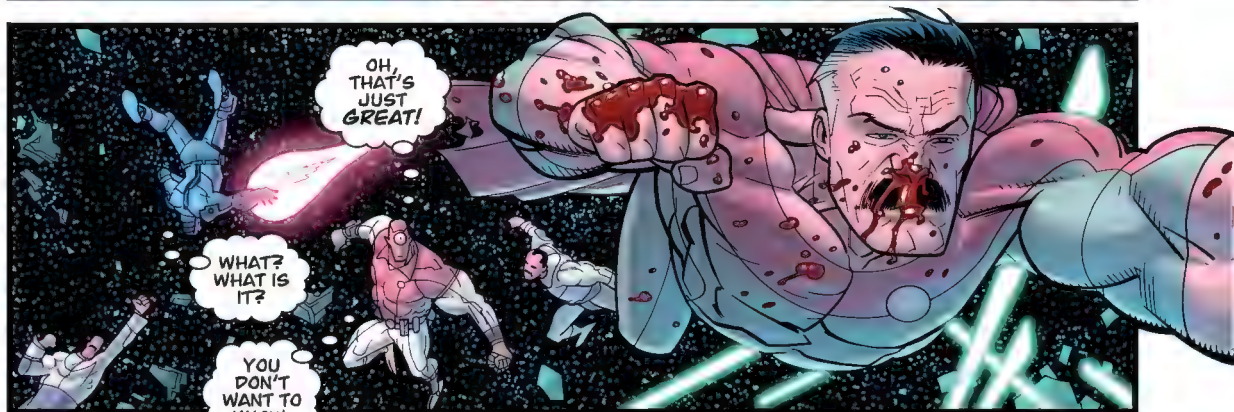
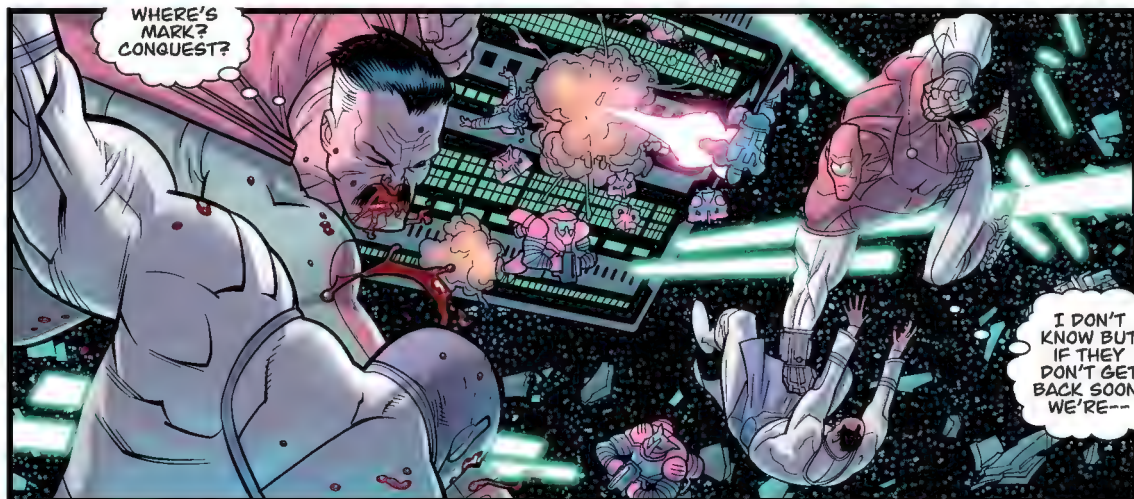
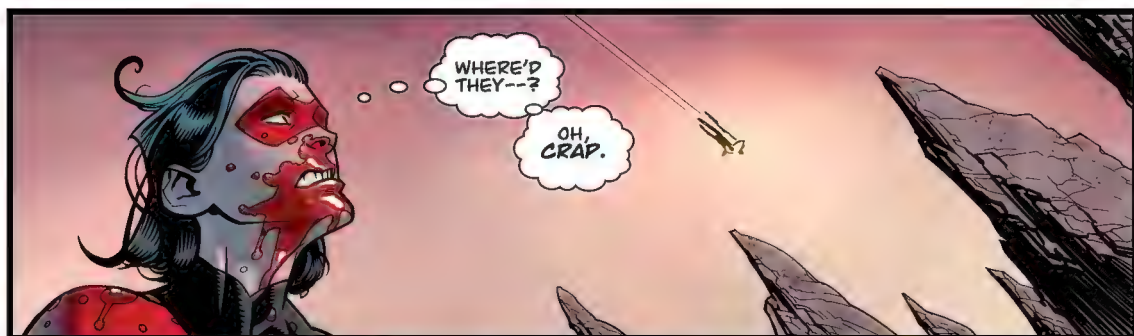


WHAT'S THIS
SUPPOSED TO
DO? I GOT A
BREATH.

YOU
REALLY
THINK I
CAN'T MAKE
YOU LET
GO?

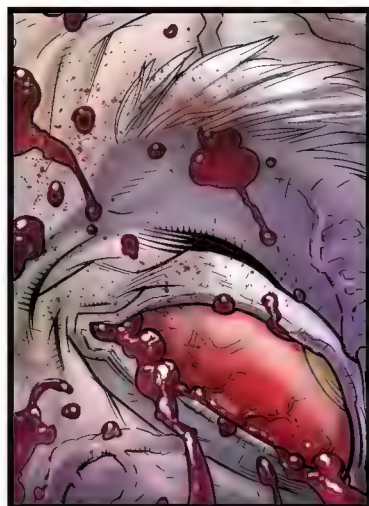
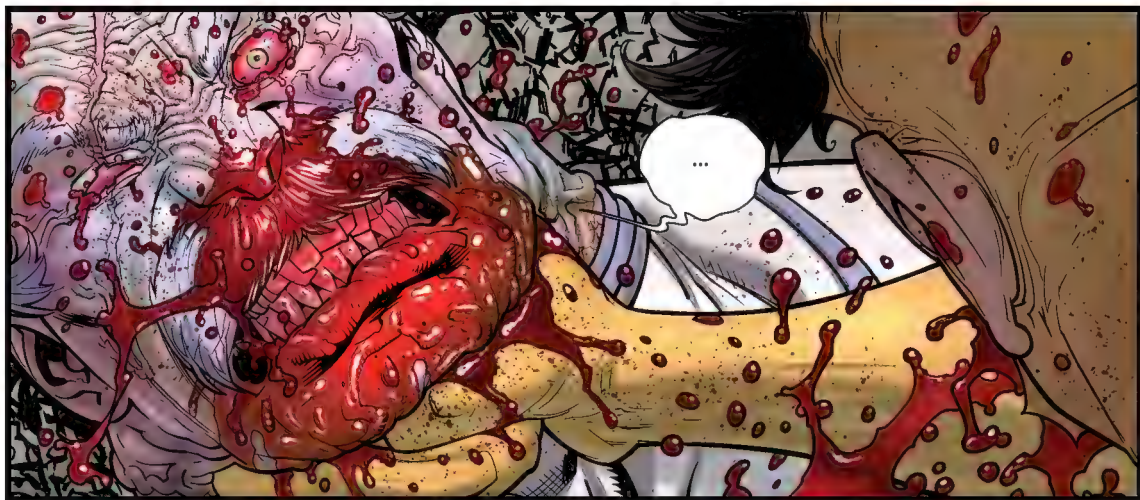


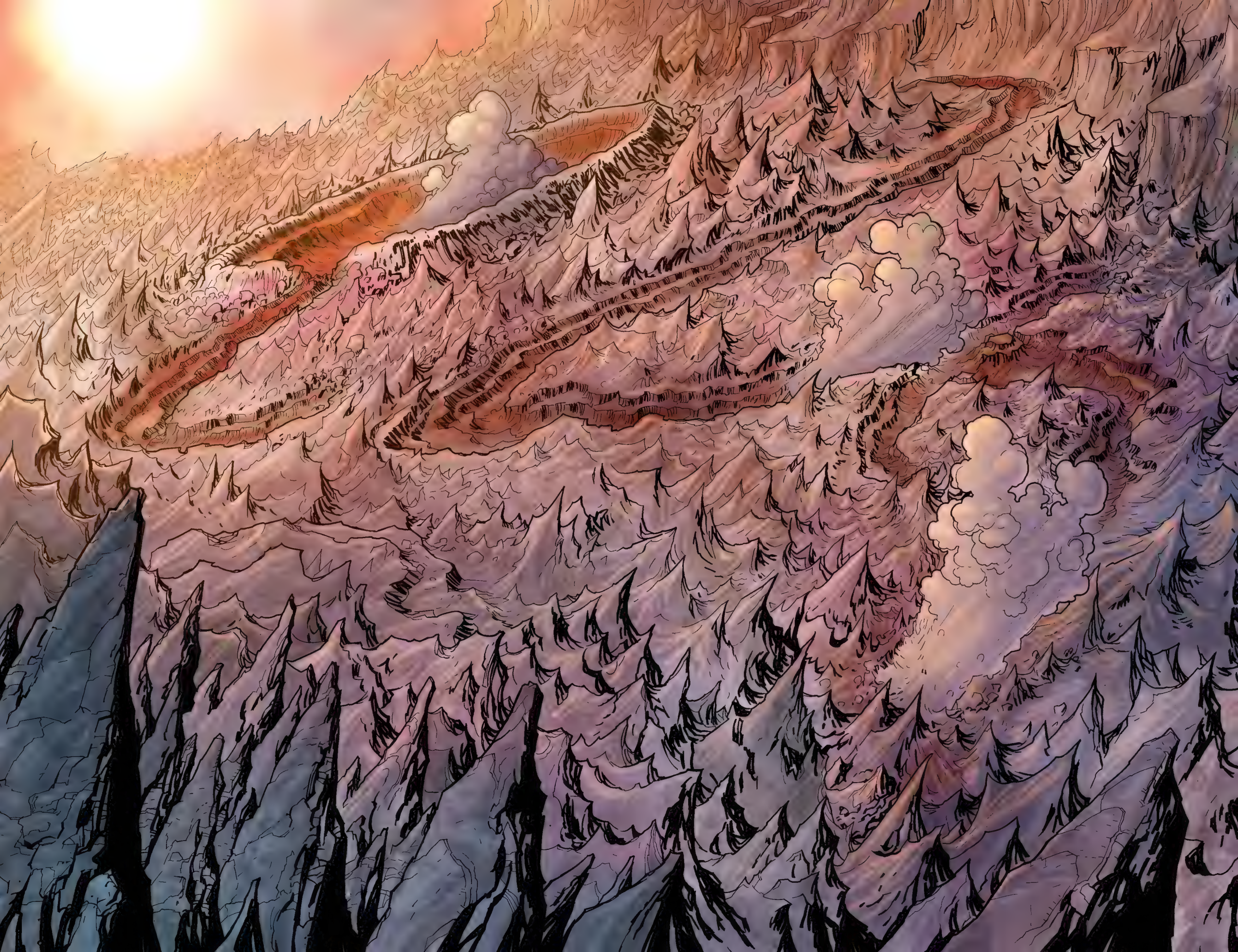
LOOKS LIKE
I'M CHANGING
THE DEATH
ORDER. YOU'RE
NUMBER ONE, KID.







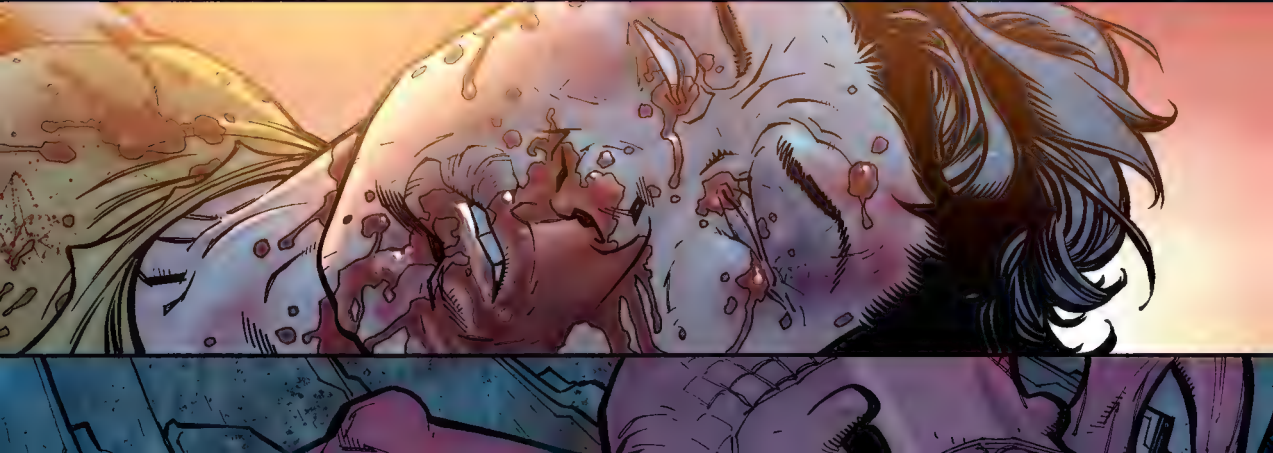


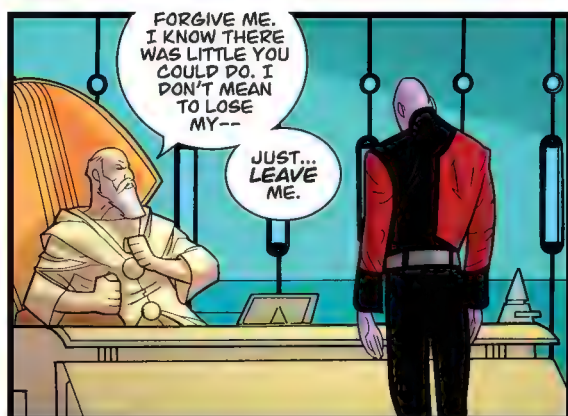


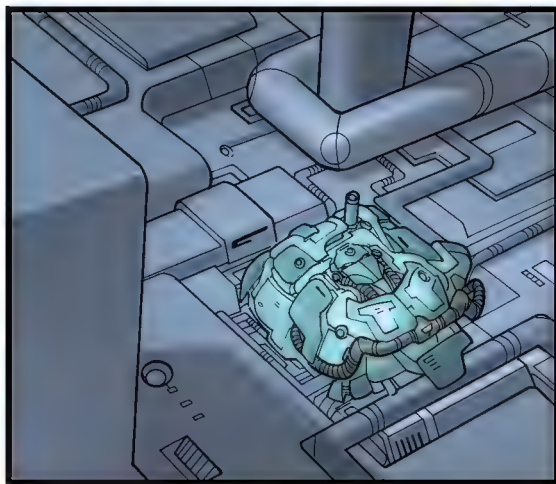
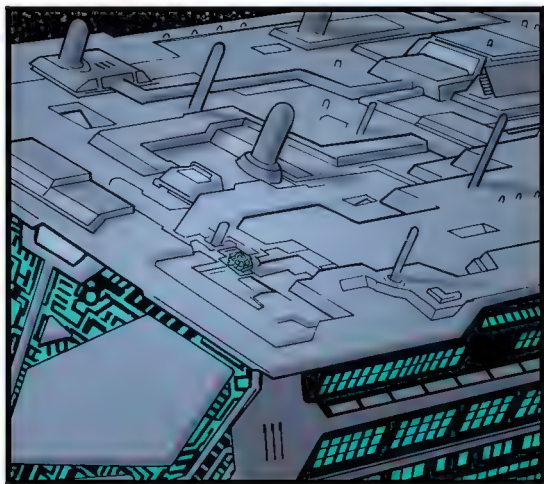
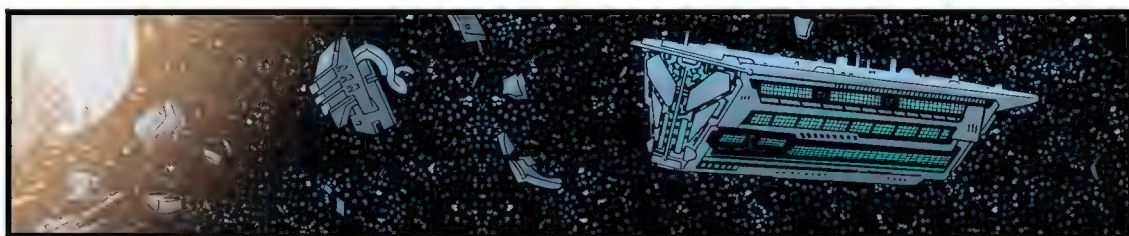
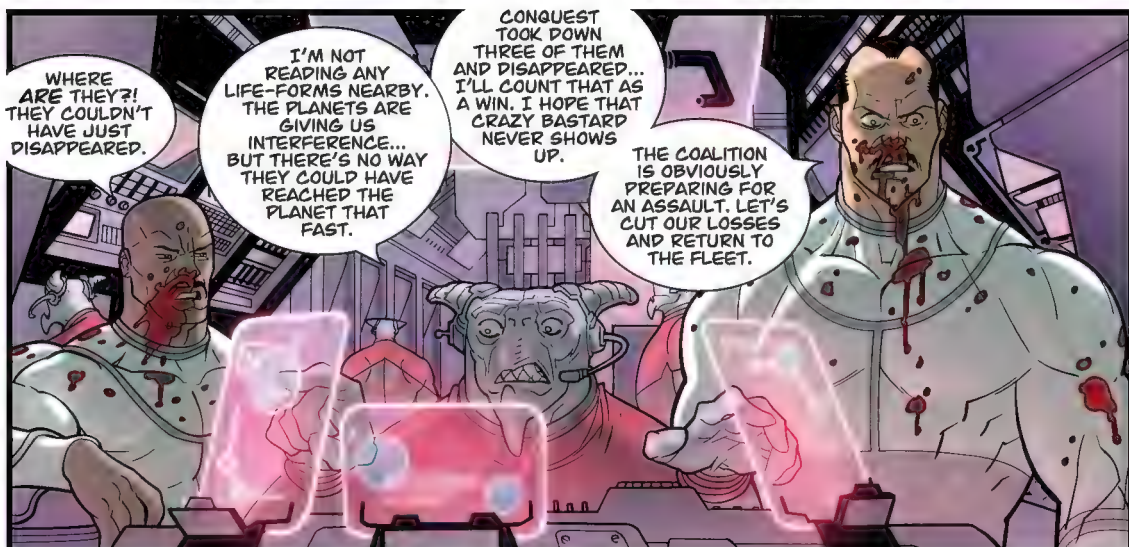


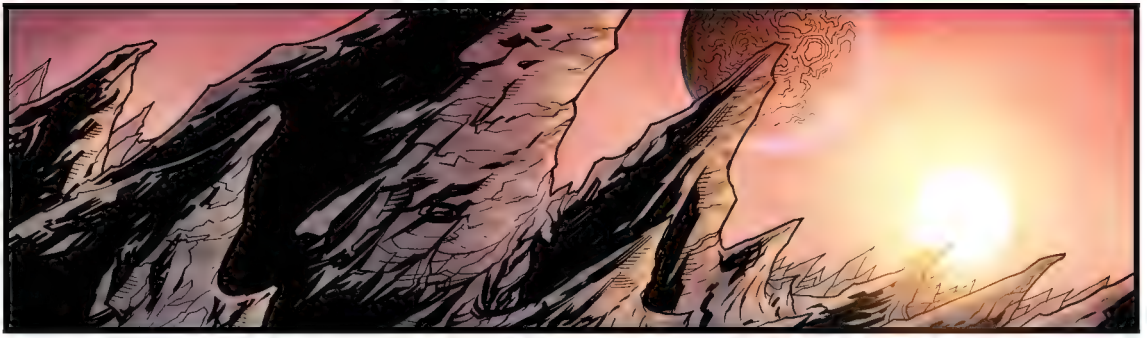


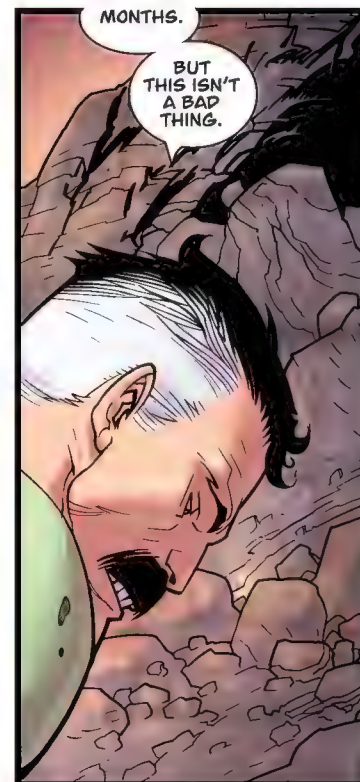
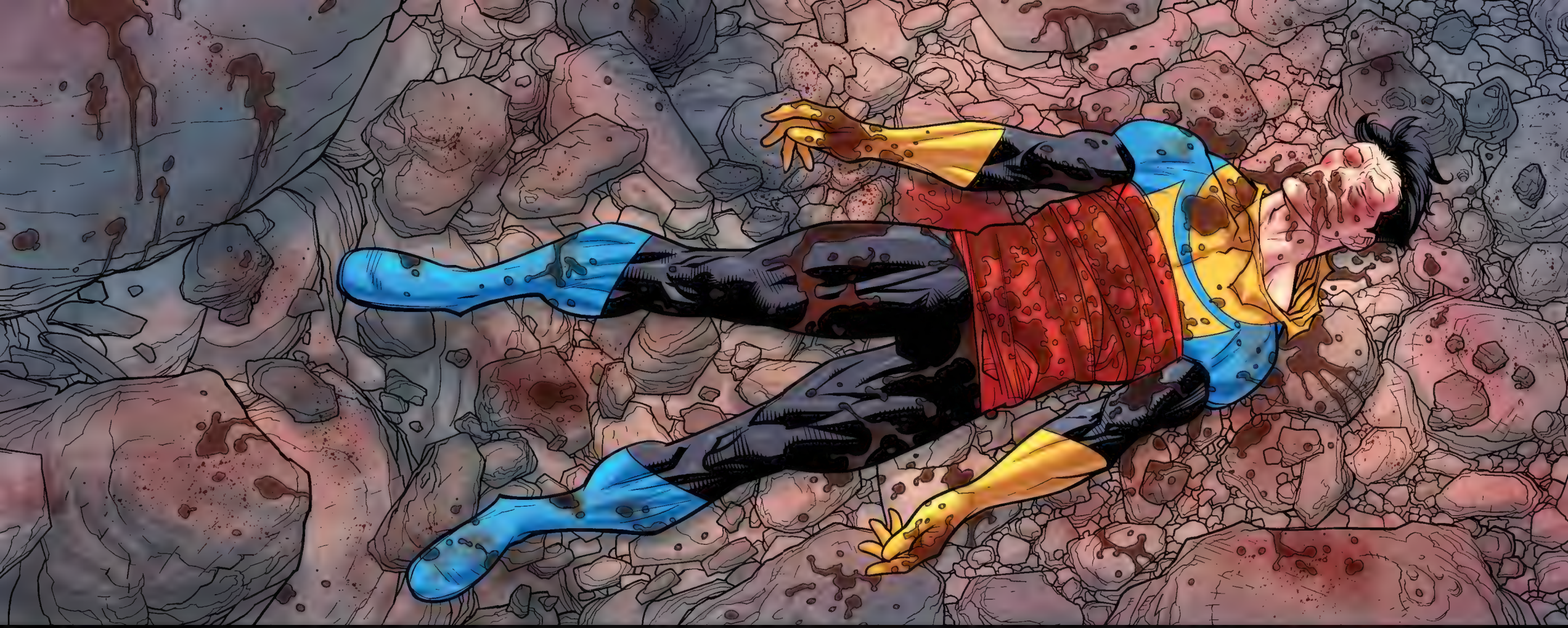
CHAPTER THREE

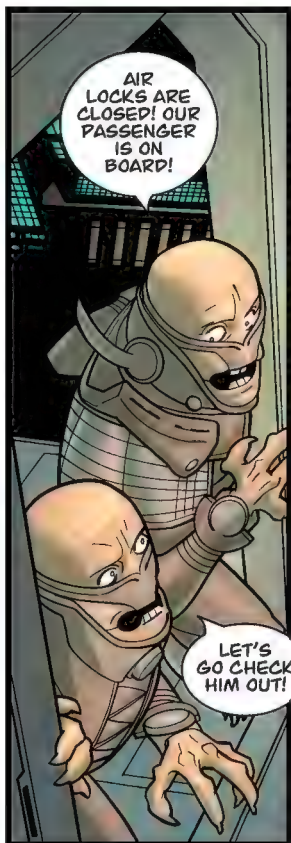
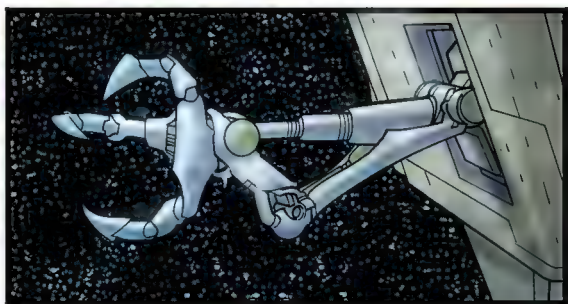
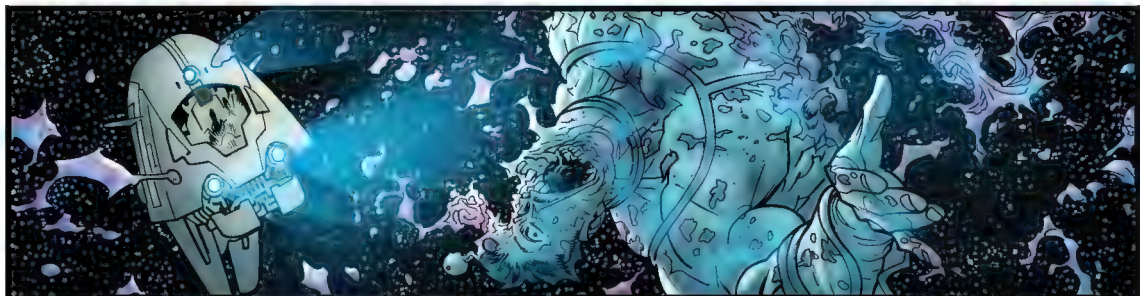
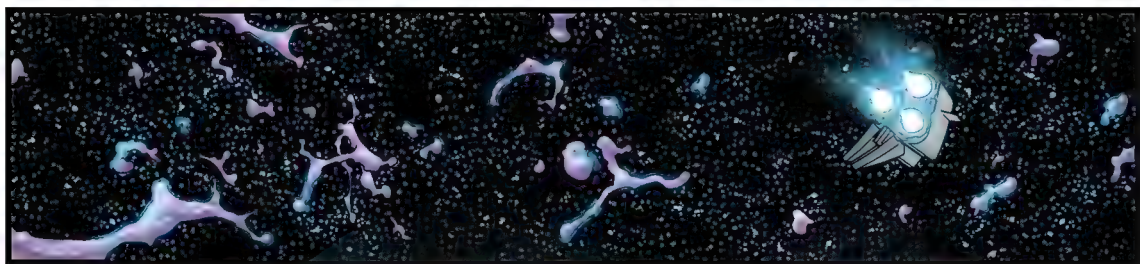


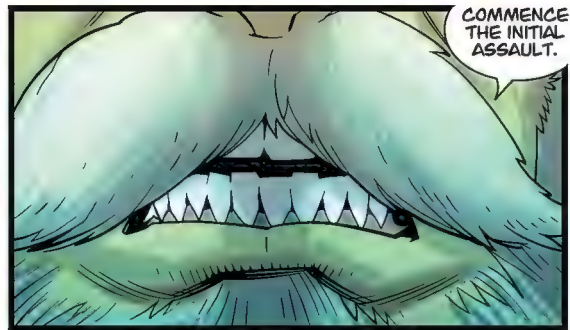
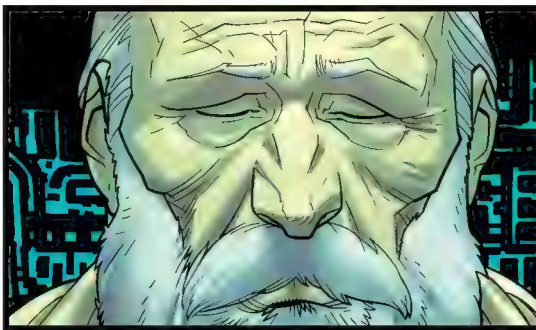
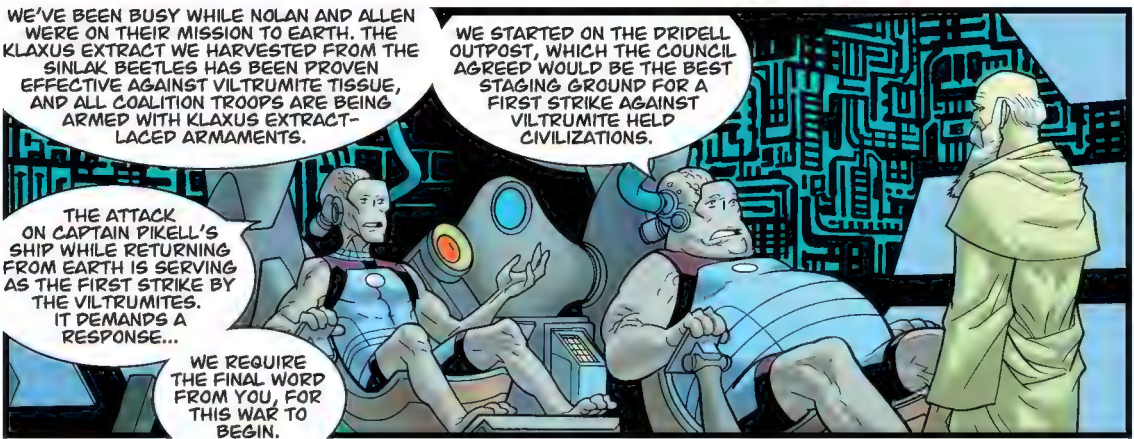
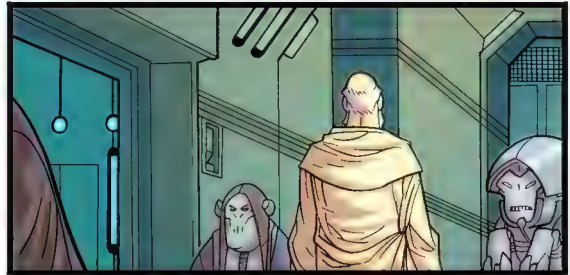
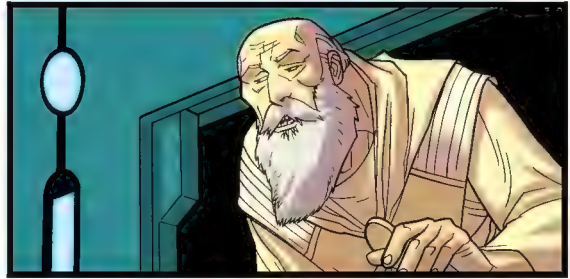
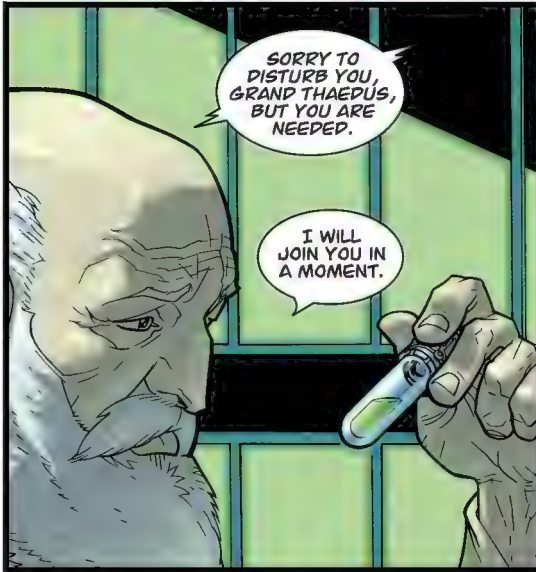
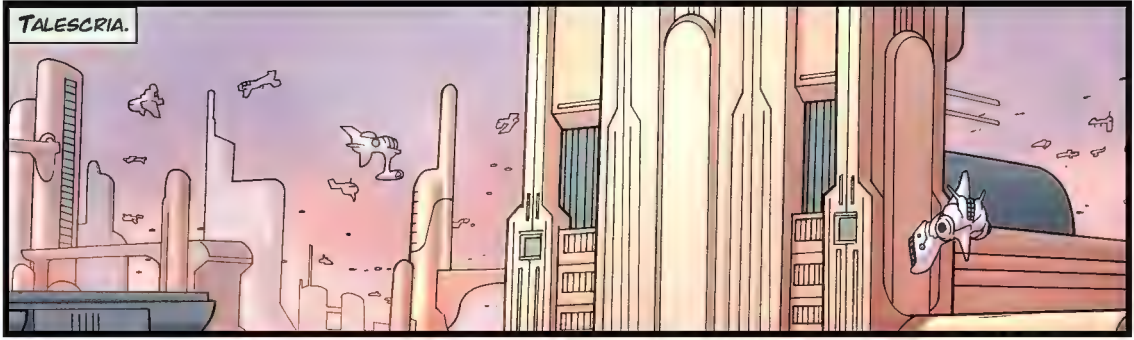






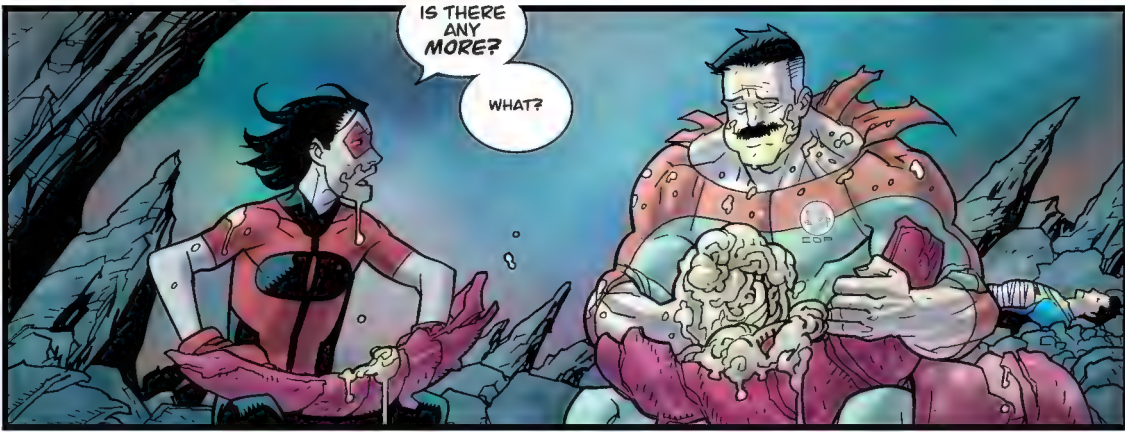
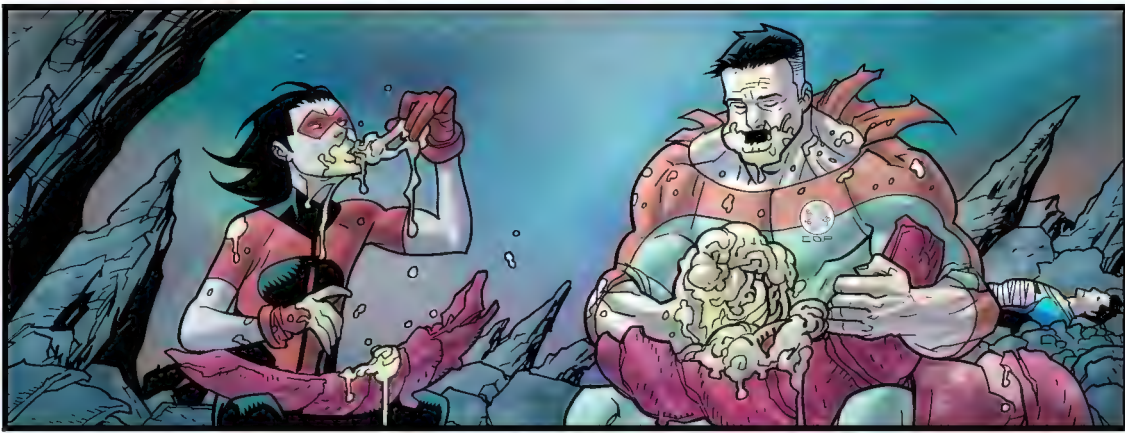
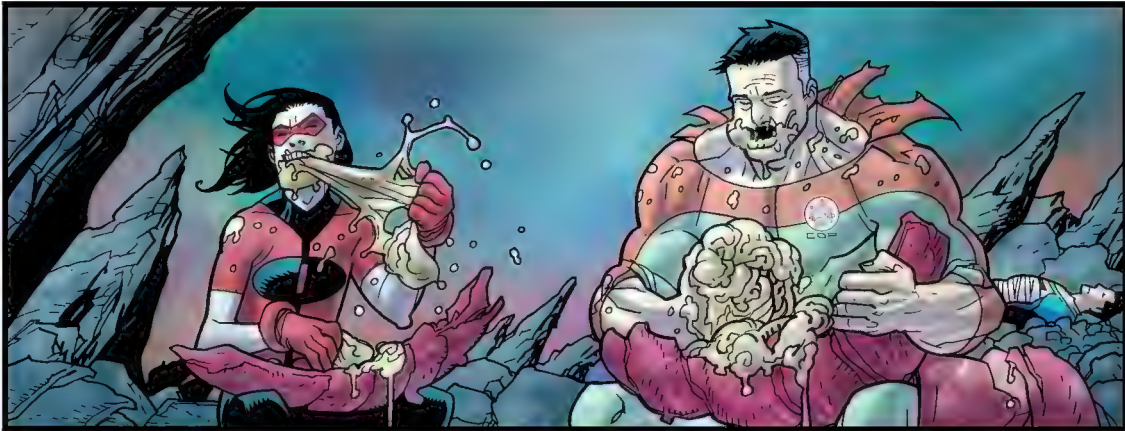


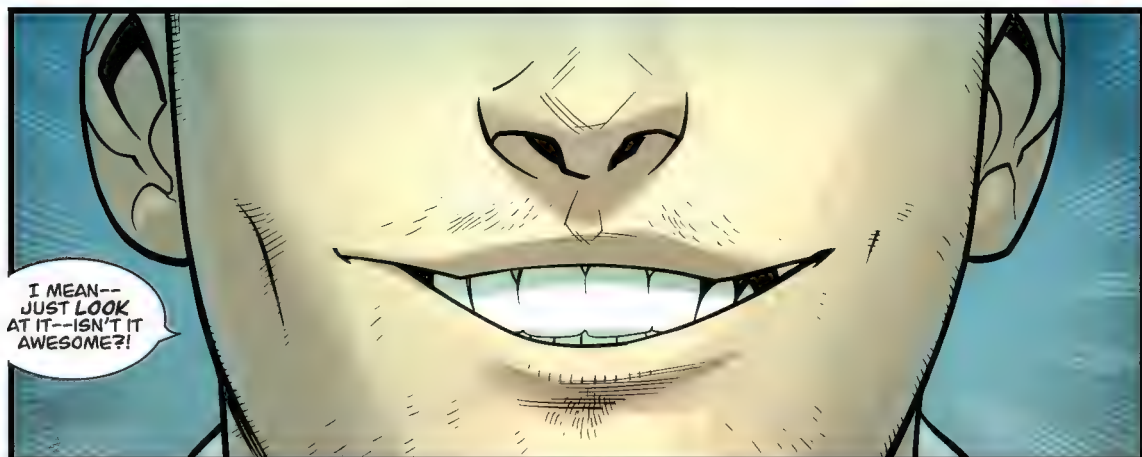










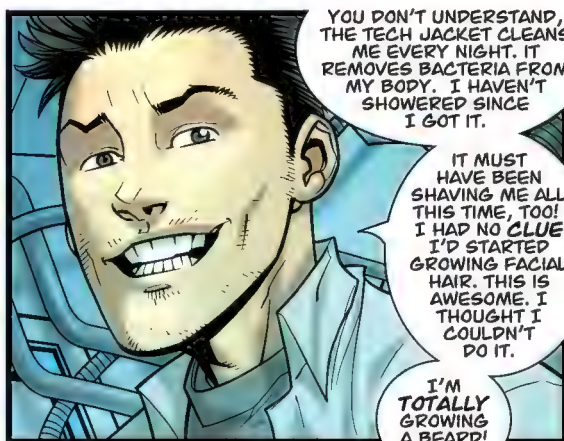


I MEAN--
JUST LOOK
AT IT--ISN'T IT
AWESOME?!



I CAN SEE IT, IT'S
GREAT... REALLY.
DO YOU HAVE TO
KEEP BRINGING IT
UP? IT'S JUST
FACIAL HAIR.

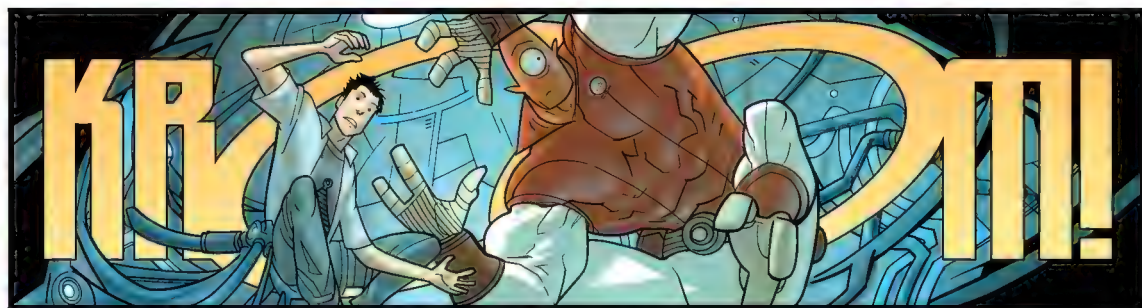
THIS IS
WORSE THAN
WHEN YOU WERE
EXPLAINING
WHERE YOUR
EXCREMENT
WENT...



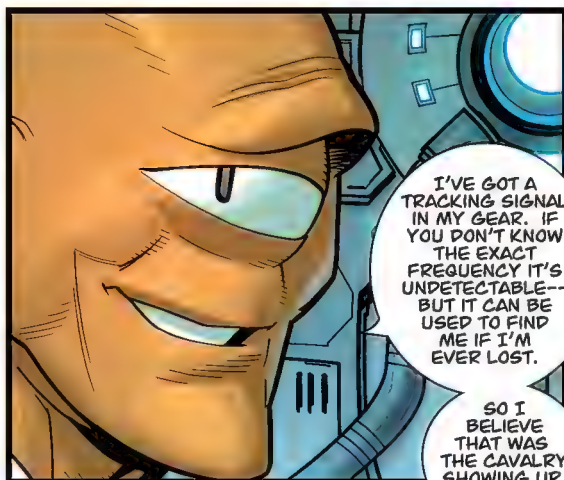
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THE TECH JACKET CLEANS
ME EVERY NIGHT. IT
REMOVES BACTERIA FROM
MY BODY. I HAVEN'T
SHOWERED SINCE
I GOT IT.

IT MUST
HAVE BEEN
SHAVING ME ALL
THIS TIME, TOO!
I HAD NO CLUE
I'D STARTED
GROWING FACIAL
HAIR. THIS IS
AWESOME. I
THOUGHT I
COULDN'T
DO IT.

I'M
TOTALLY
GROWING
A BEARD!



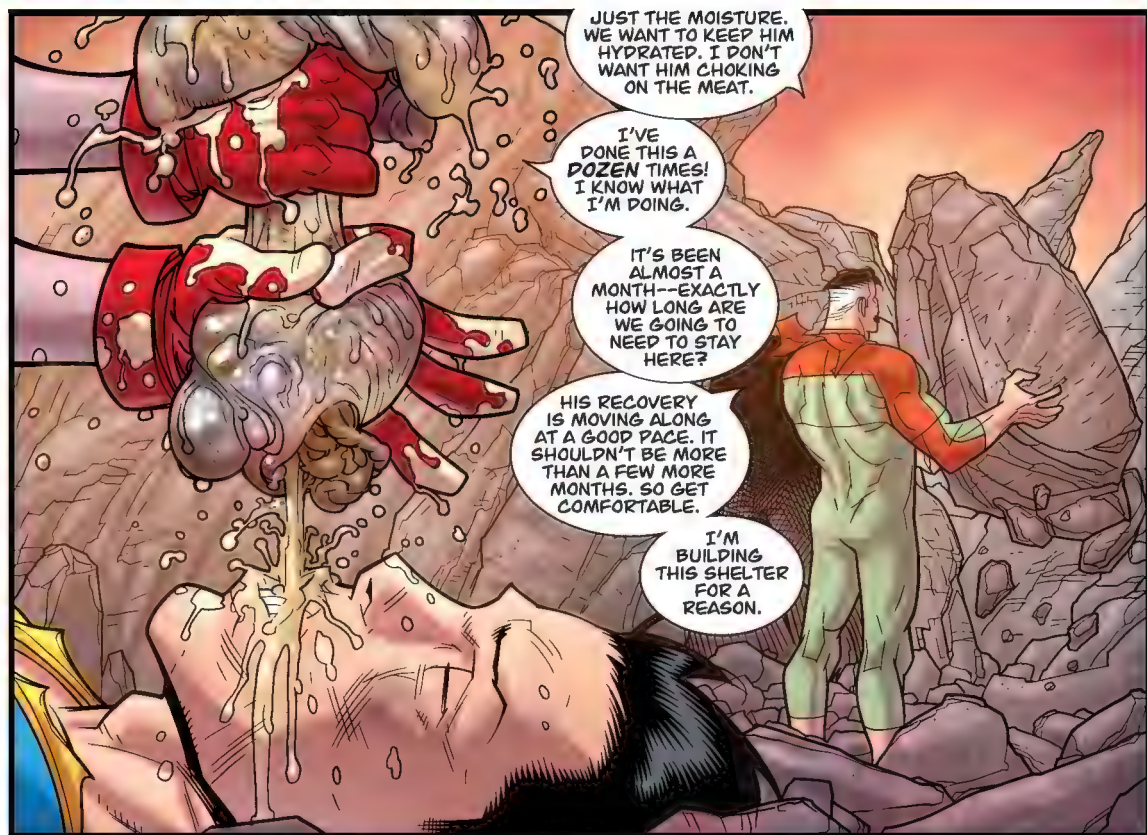
WHAT
THE HECK
WAS
THAT?!



I'VE GOT A
TRACKING SIGNAL
IN MY GEAR. IF
YOU DON'T KNOW
THE EXACT
FREQUENCY IT'S
UNDETECTABLE--
BUT IT CAN BE
USED TO FIND
ME IF I'M
EVER LOST.

SO I
BELIEVE
THAT WAS
THE CAVALRY
SHOWING UP.





JUST THE MOISTURE. WE WANT TO KEEP HIM HYDRATED. I DON'T WANT HIM CHOKING ON THE MEAT.

I'VE DONE THIS A DOZEN TIMES! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.

IT'S BEEN ALMOST A MONTH--EXACTLY HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO NEED TO STAY HERE?

HIS RECOVERY IS MOVING ALONG AT A GOOD PACE. IT SHOULDN'T BE MORE THAN A FEW MORE MONTHS. SO GET COMFORTABLE.

I'M BUILDING THIS SHELTER FOR A REASON.



MY MOM, NOT MY REAL MOM, MY EARTH MOM, MARK'S MOM, UH--DEBBIE.

YOU REALLY THINK YOU LOVE HER?



I KNOW I DO.

IT TOOK ME MONTHS OF HEALING IN A VILTRUMITE PRISON TO MAKE ME REALIZE IT... BUT YES, I DO.



WE HAVE AFFECTION, THE VILTRUMITES, BUT WE DON'T CARE FOR EACH OTHER LIKE HUMANS DO. OUR LIVES ARE SO LONG THAT OVER TIME WE GROW DISTANT, IT'S HARD TO FORM A BOND WITH SOMEONE OVER THAT MUCH TIME.

YOU'LL NEVER FIND ONE OF US WHO WILL ADMIT IT-- BUT WE LIVE VERY LONELY, SOLITARY LIVES. ESPECIALLY WITH OUR NUMBERS SO DEPLETED.

LIVING ON EARTH CHANGED ME. SEEING HUMANS GROW SO CLOSE TO EACH OTHER, CARING SO DEEPLY FOR THEIR LOVED ONES IN THE SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME ALLOTTED FOR THEM... IT WAS SPECIAL, SOMETHING TO BE ADMIRER.



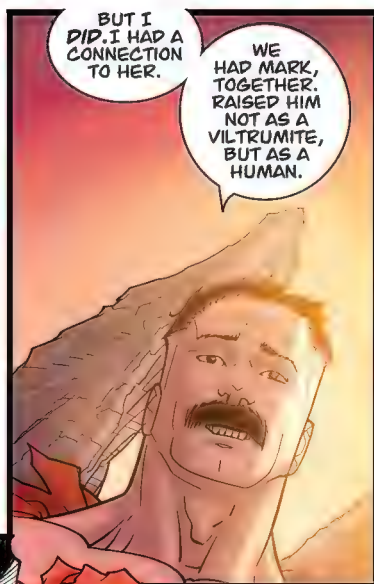
AT FIRST I WAS A SPECTATOR, WATCHING AS THEY LIVED THEIR LIVES. ACTING AS ONE OF THEM, GROWING CLOSE TO DEBBIE, PRETENDING TO FORM A BOND.

BUT WHY HER? DID I JUST PICK HER AT RANDOM?



AT FIRST I THOUGHT I HAD, I TOLD MYSELF THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY.

I COULDN'T ACTUALLY CARE FOR THIS FRAIL CREATURE.



BUT I DID. I HAD A CONNECTION TO HER.

WE HAD MARK, TOGETHER. RAISED HIM NOT AS A VILTRUMITE, BUT AS A HUMAN.



I THOUGHT I WAS BIDDING MY TIME, WAITING TO SEE IF MARK DEVELOPED POWERS... WAITING TO SEE HOW HUMAN DNA MIXED WITH VILTRUMITE DNA... IF HE'D HAVE POWERS AND IF SO, HOW CLOSE TO VILTRUMITE STRENGTH HE WAS.

BUT I NEVER LOOKED AT THAT LIFE AS A CHORE. I ENJOYED IT.

OVER TIME, I FELL INTO THE ROLE OF HUMAN HUSBAND, HUMAN FATHER... SO MUCH SO THAT WHEN MARK GOT HIS POWERS...

...IT WAS A GREAT BURDEN MORE THAN ANYTHING.



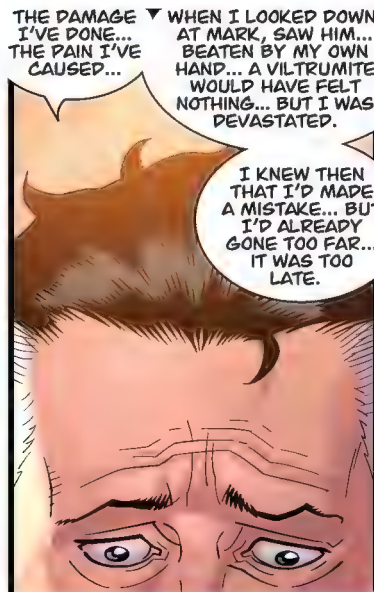
I HAD TO GO BACK TO BEING A VILTRUMITE. I HAD TO DO WHAT I WAS PUT THERE TO DO.

WHETHER I WANTED TO OR NOT.



I SPENT A LOT OF TIME ALONE, THEN... CONSIDERING IF I COULD IGNORE MY DUTY, CONTINUE LIVING THE LIE I'D ENJOYED SO MUCH... WITH THE WOMAN I'D GROWN TO LOVE.

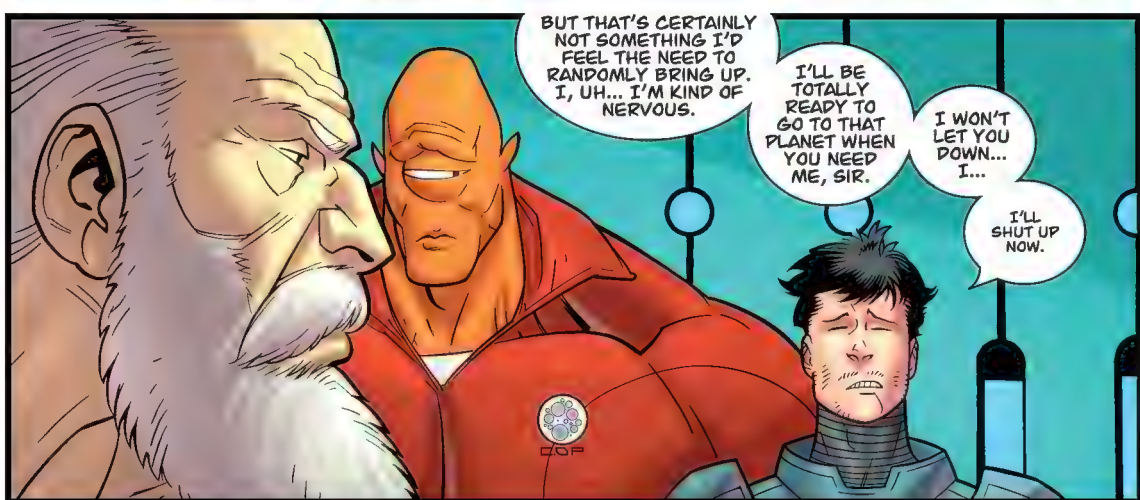
IN THE END... I CHOSE TO CARRY OUT MY MISSION... DESPITE HOW CONFLICTED I WAS.



THE DAMAGE I'VE DONE... THE PAIN I'VE CAUSED...

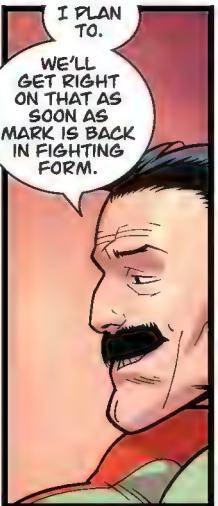
WHEN I LOOKED DOWN AT MARK, SAW HIM... BEATEN BY MY OWN HAND... A VILTRUMITE WOULD HAVE FELT NOTHING... BUT I WAS DEVASTATED.

I KNEW THEN THAT I'D MADE A MISTAKE... BUT I'D ALREADY GONE TOO FAR... IT WAS TOO LATE.

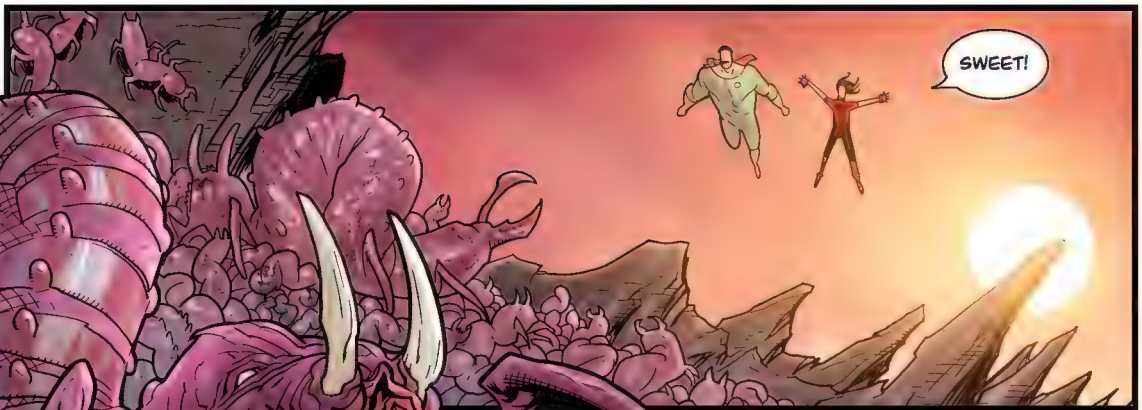
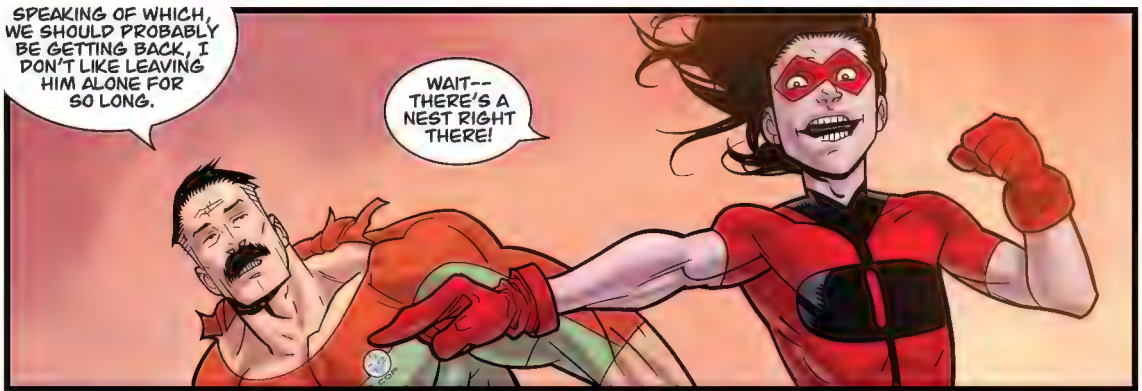


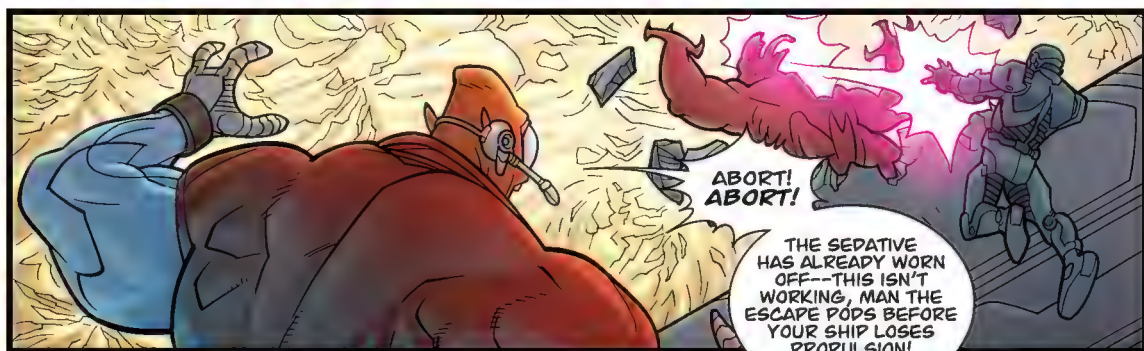


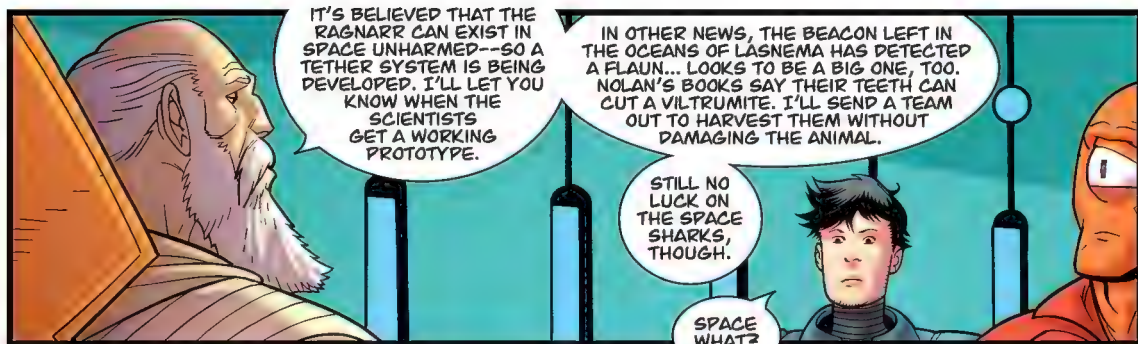
THAT'S ONLY NATURAL. I CAN'T SAY I'VE NEVER FOUND MYSELF SADDENED BY HER PASSING.



SPEAKING OF WHICH, WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE GETTING BACK, I DON'T LIKE LEAVING HIM ALONE FOR SO LONG.





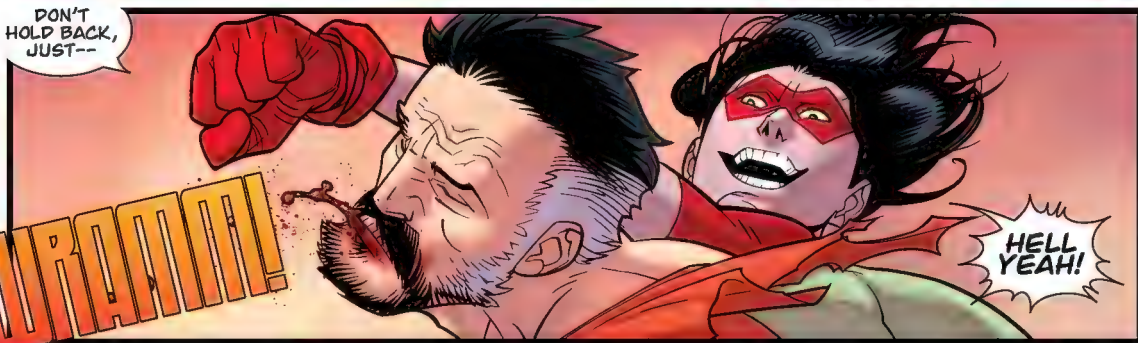


IT'S BELIEVED THAT THE RAGNARR CAN EXIST IN SPACE UNHARMED--SO A TETHER SYSTEM IS BEING DEVELOPED. I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN THE SCIENTISTS GET A WORKING PROTOTYPE.

IN OTHER NEWS, THE BEACON LEFT IN THE OCEANS OF LASNEMA HAS DETECTED A FLAUN... LOOKS TO BE A BIG ONE, TOO. NOLAN'S BOOKS SAY THEIR TEETH CAN CUT A VILTRUMITE. I'LL SEND A TEAM OUT TO HARVEST THEM WITHOUT DAMAGING THE ANIMAL.

STILL NO LUCK ON THE SPACE SHARKS, THOUGH.

SPACE WHAT?



DON'T HOLD BACK, JUST--

HELL YEAH!



BATTLE BEAST HAS AGREED TO JOIN OUR RANKS. HE'S ACCOMPANIED A SQUADRON TO THE VILTRUMITE-CONTROLLED PLANET QUINTESSA, DESPITE HIS INITIAL REFUSAL OF ANYTHING HE DEEMED ASSISTANCE.

THE KRESH UPRISING ON GELDARIA HAS BEEN QUELLED... BUT UNFORTUNATELY WE DID LOSE CONTROL OF OOLA. LUCKILY, ANOTHER STAGING GROUND HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ON GLACIA PRIME.

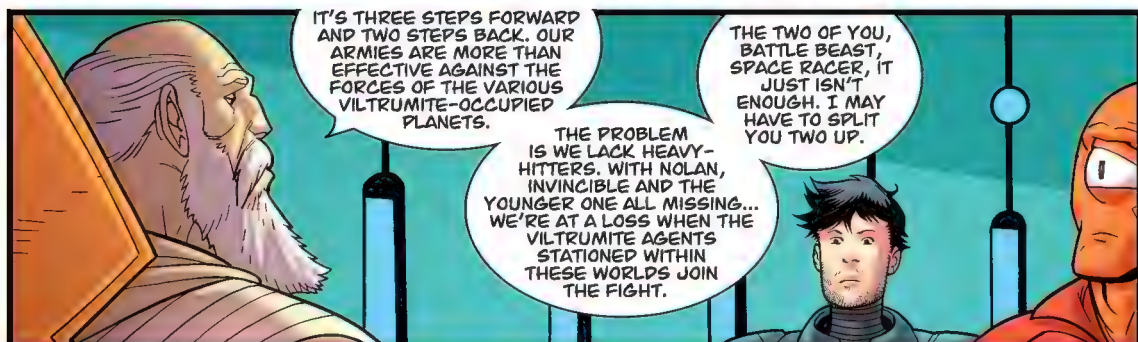
ENJOY YOUR DOWNTIME, WE NEED YOU BACK ON THE FRONT IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.



CAN'T--

DON'T TELL ME THAT--LOOK AT YOU--LOOK AT HOW MUCH STRONGER YOU'VE GOTTEN OVER THE LAST MONTH! YOU'VE GOT THIS!

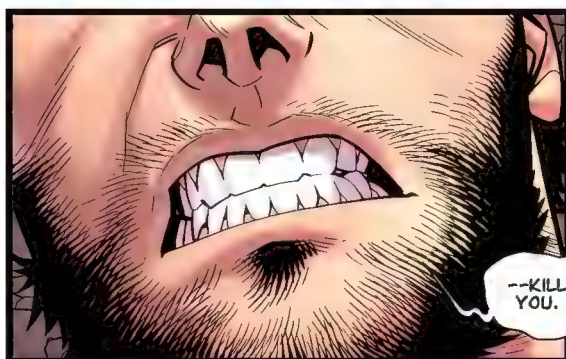
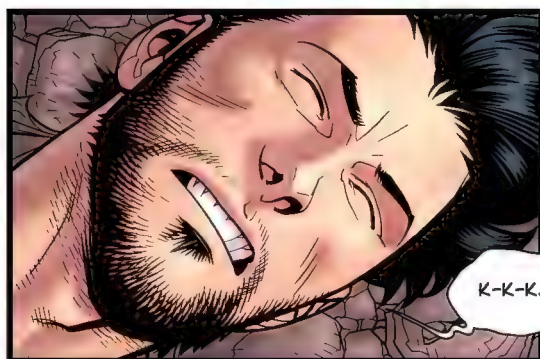
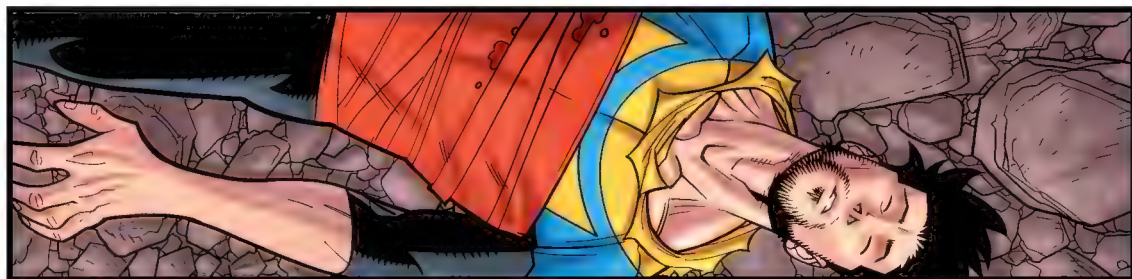
KEEP GOING, OLIVER! YOU CAN DO IT!

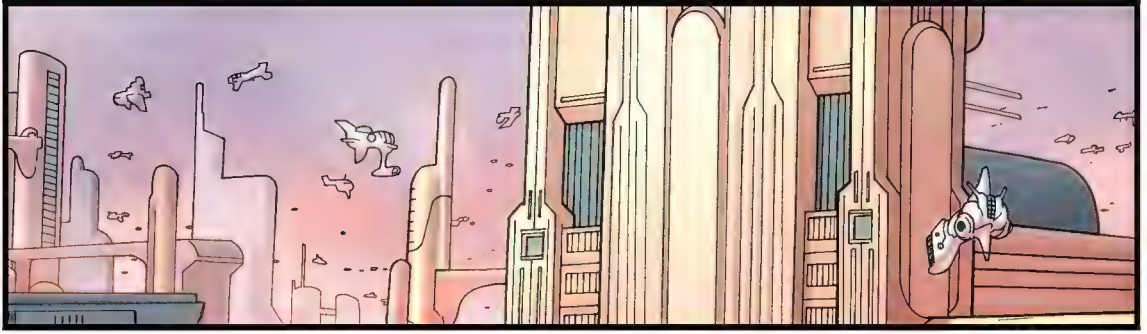


IT'S THREE STEPS FORWARD AND TWO STEPS BACK. OUR ARMIES ARE MORE THAN EFFECTIVE AGAINST THE FORCES OF THE VARIOUS VILTRUMITE-OCCUPIED PLANETS.

THE PROBLEM IS WE LACK HEAVY-HITTERS. WITH NOLAN, INVINCIBLE AND THE YOUNGER ONE ALL MISSING... WE'RE AT A LOSS WHEN THE VILTRUMITE AGENTS STATIONED WITHIN THESE WORLDS JOIN THE FIGHT.

THE TWO OF YOU, BATTLE BEAST, SPACE RACER, IT JUST ISN'T ENOUGH. I MAY HAVE TO SPLIT YOU TWO UP.





THE FIGHTING ON DRAKUS MINOR HAS HALTED FOR THE MOMENT. COMMUNICATION COMING IN FROM GELDARIA INDICATES THINGS ARE QUIET IN THAT QUADRANT.

HELLO?

HOW ARE THINGS ON YOUR END?

BATTLE BEAST IS REFUSING A LEAVE PERIOD FOLLOWING HIS VICTORY OVER THE VILTRUMITES ON QUINTESSA. THAT ONE IS VERY DEDICATED.

YOU'VE BEEN FEEDING US INFORMATION FOR YEARS-- BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH. WE ARE STILL LOSING PLANETS TO THE COALITION.

THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE.

WE WILL STRIKE THE COALITION HEADQUARTERS ON TALESCRIA. YOU WILL SHUT DOWN THEIR DEFENSES AT THE TIME BEING TRANSMITTED TO YOU.

RESPOND.

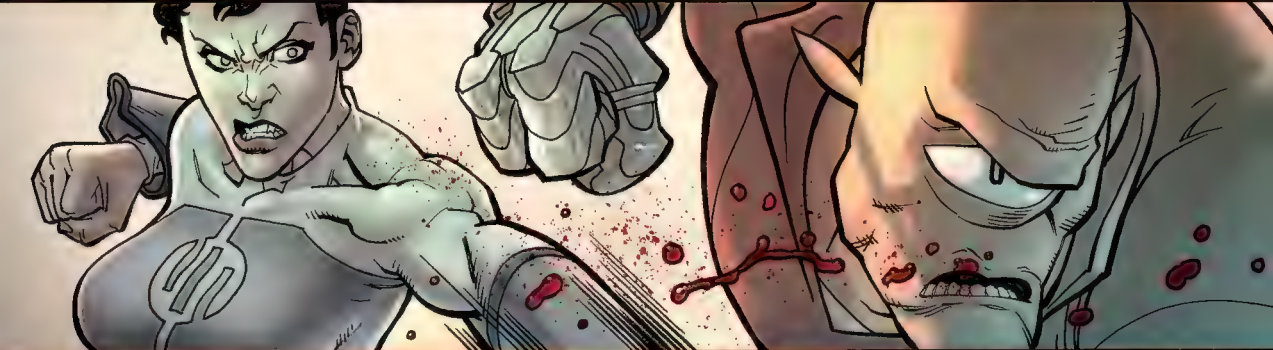
IT WILL BE DONE.

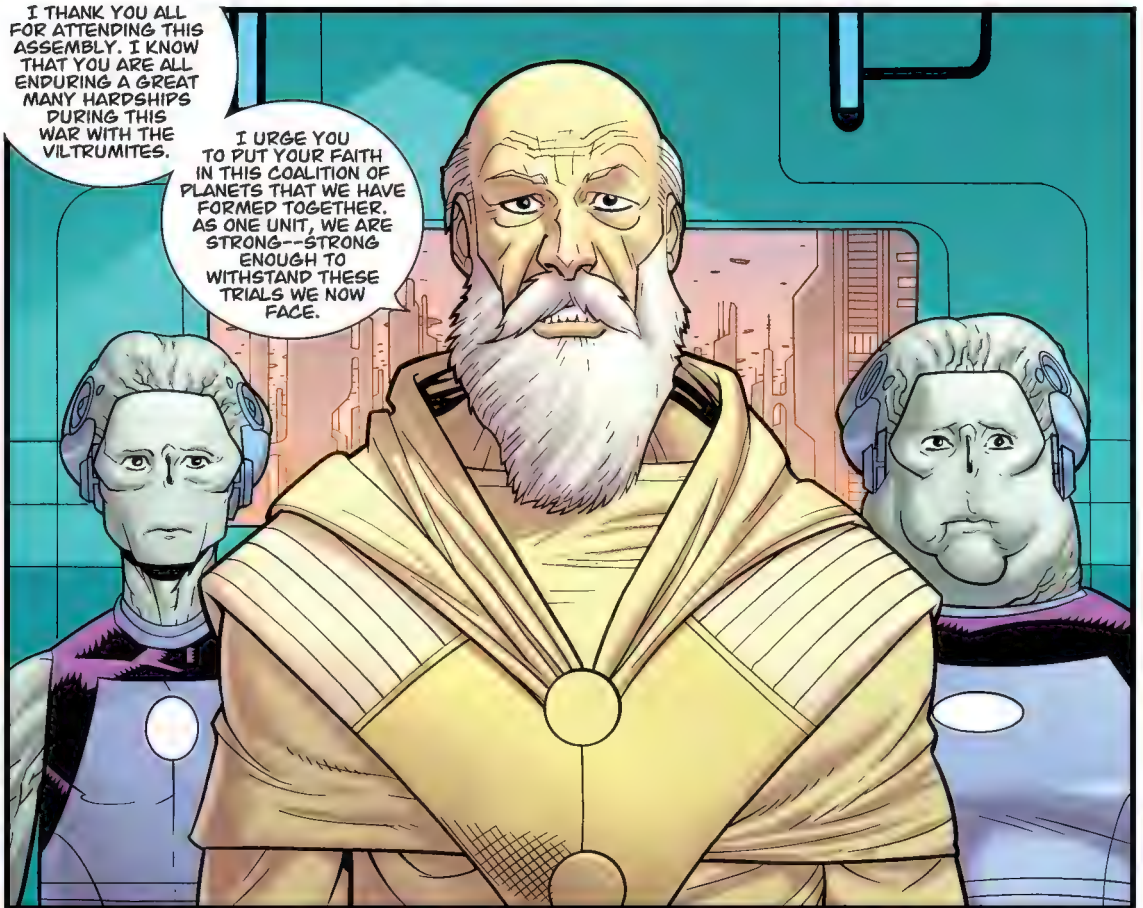
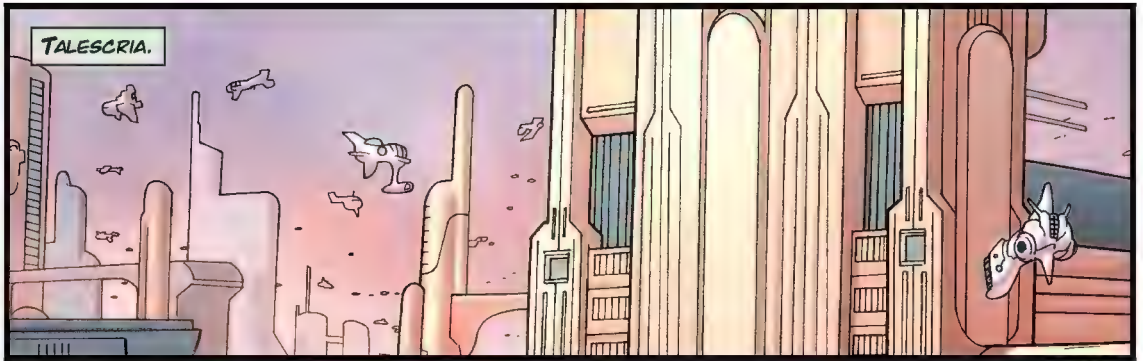
WHAT? WHAT WILL BE DONE?

WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?



CHAPTER FOUR





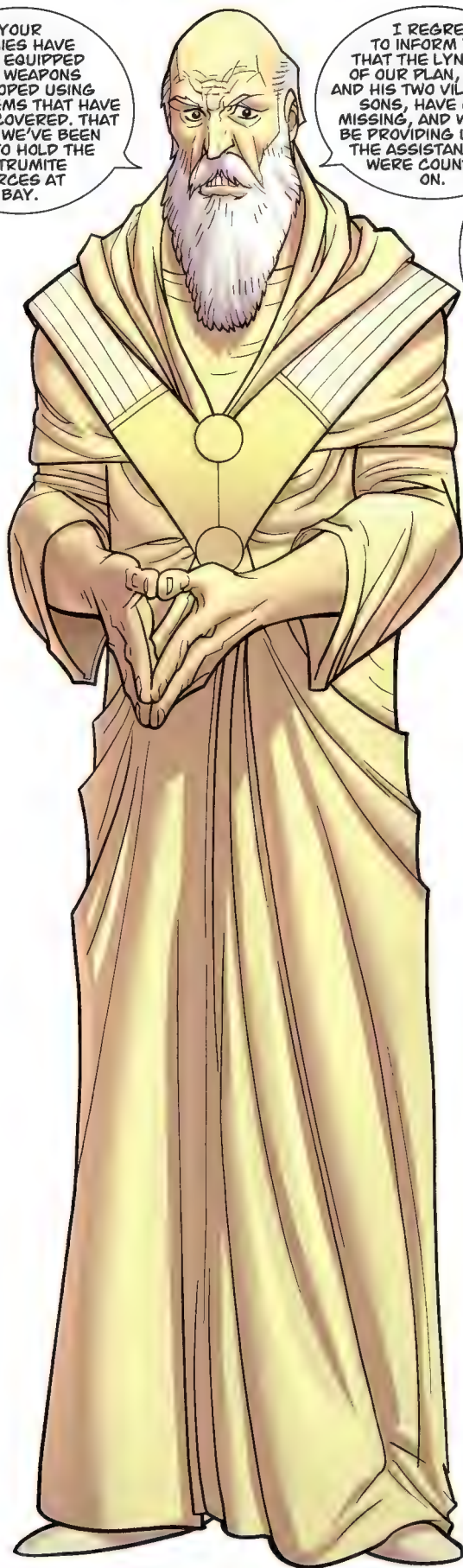
YOUR
ARMIES HAVE
BEEN EQUIPPED
WITH WEAPONS
DEVELOPED USING
THESE ITEMS THAT HAVE
BEEN RECOVERED. THAT
IS HOW WE'VE BEEN
ABLE TO HOLD THE
VILTRUMITE
FORCES AT
BAY.

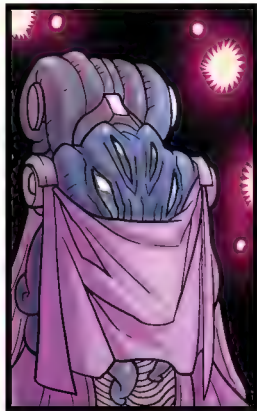
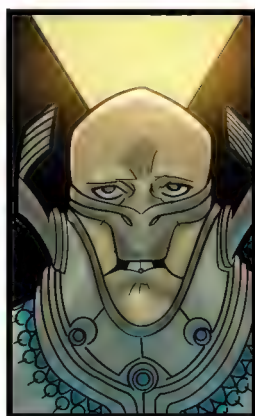
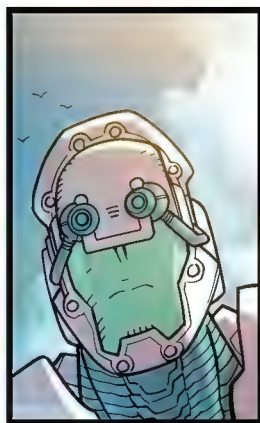
I REGRET
TO INFORM YOU
THAT THE LYNCHPIN
OF OUR PLAN, NOLAN
AND HIS TWO VILTRUMITE
SONS, HAVE GONE
MISSING, AND WILL NOT
BE PROVIDING US WITH
THE ASSISTANCE WE
WERE COUNTING
ON.

BUT FEAR
NOT, AS LONG
AS WE CONTINUE
TO WORK
TOGETHER, AS A
UNIFIED FRONT
AGAINST THE
VILTRUMITES--
WE WILL
SUCCEED.

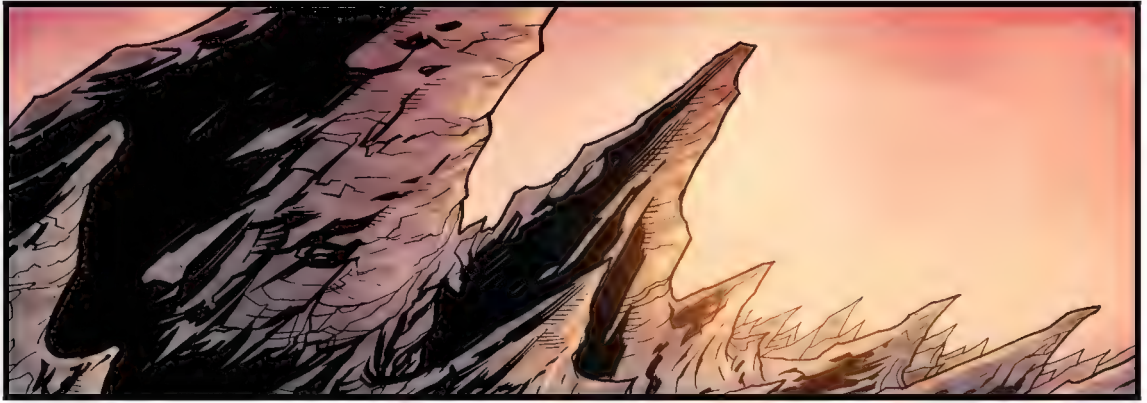
WE WILL
FINALLY RID
THE UNIVERSE
OF THIS
SCOURGE
ONCE AND
FOR ALL.

WE--









...I'M STILL VERY YOUNG BY THEIR STANDARDS, NOT THAT HUMAN KIDS MY CURRENT AGE DON'T HAVE RELATIONSHIPS OF SOME KIND. IT'S JUST... THEIR PARAMETERS OF ATTRACTION ARE SO NARROW.

I REMEMBER MY TIME ON THRAXA... I REMEMBER THOSE PEOPLE... FINDING SOME OF THEM TO BE ATTRACTIVE, EVEN AS YOUNG AS I WAS.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THAT ON EARTH. I FIND SOME EARTH PEOPLE ATTRACTIVE, BUT IT'S ONLY THE MOST UNIQUE AMONG THEM.



MOTHER TOOK ME TO A RESTAURANT ONE TIME THAT HAD A LOBSTER TANK...

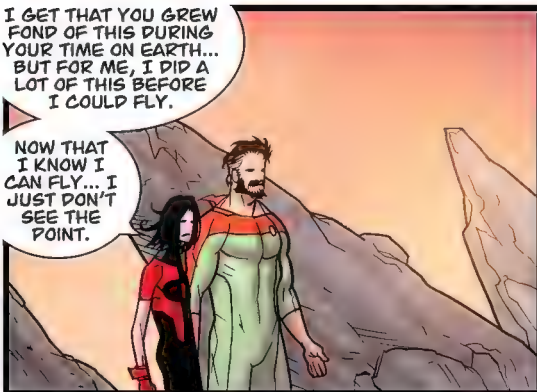


I MEAN, I STILL ATE ONE... BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS... BEAUTIFUL.



THERE ARE SOME GIRLS I COULD INTRODUCE YOU TO ON TALESCRIA. THE DAUGHTER OF THE WOMAN WHO LIVES NEXT TO ME IN MY BUILDING HAS A... SIMILAR APPEARANCE.

HAVE YOU ENJOYED YOUR WALK?



I GET THAT YOU GREW FOND OF THIS DURING YOUR TIME ON EARTH... BUT FOR ME, I DID A LOT OF THIS BEFORE I COULD FLY.

NOW THAT I KNOW I CAN FLY... I JUST DON'T SEE THE POINT.

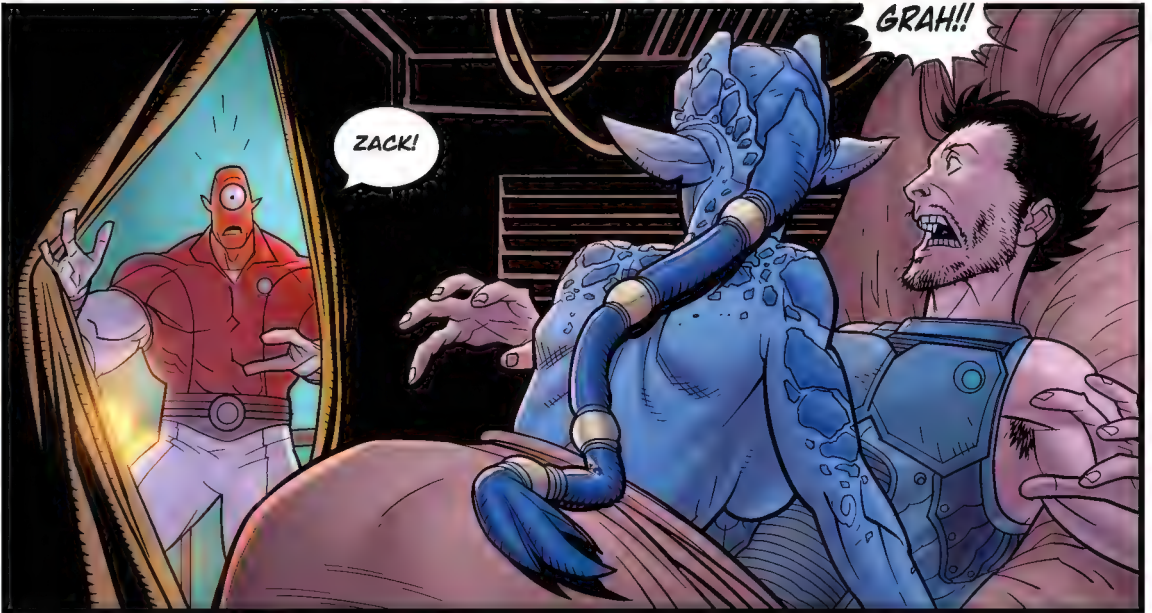
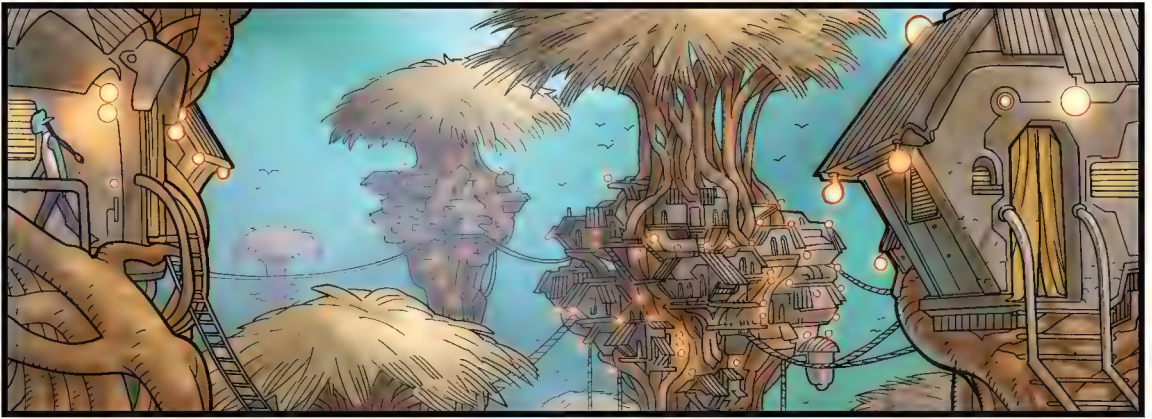


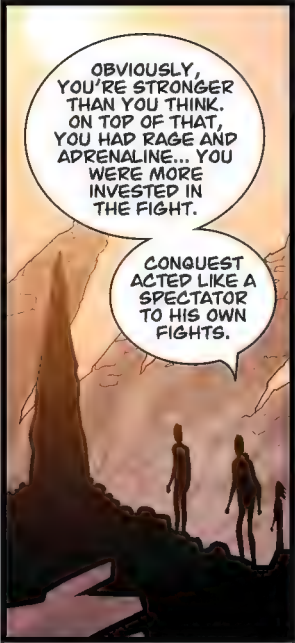
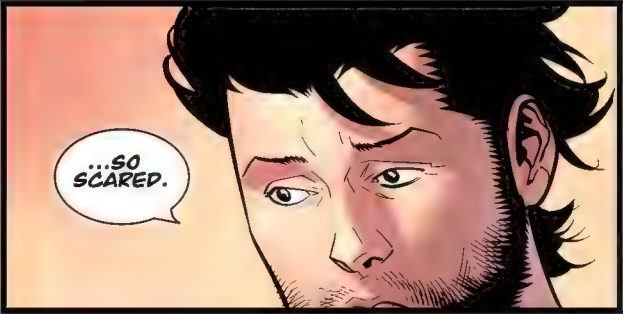
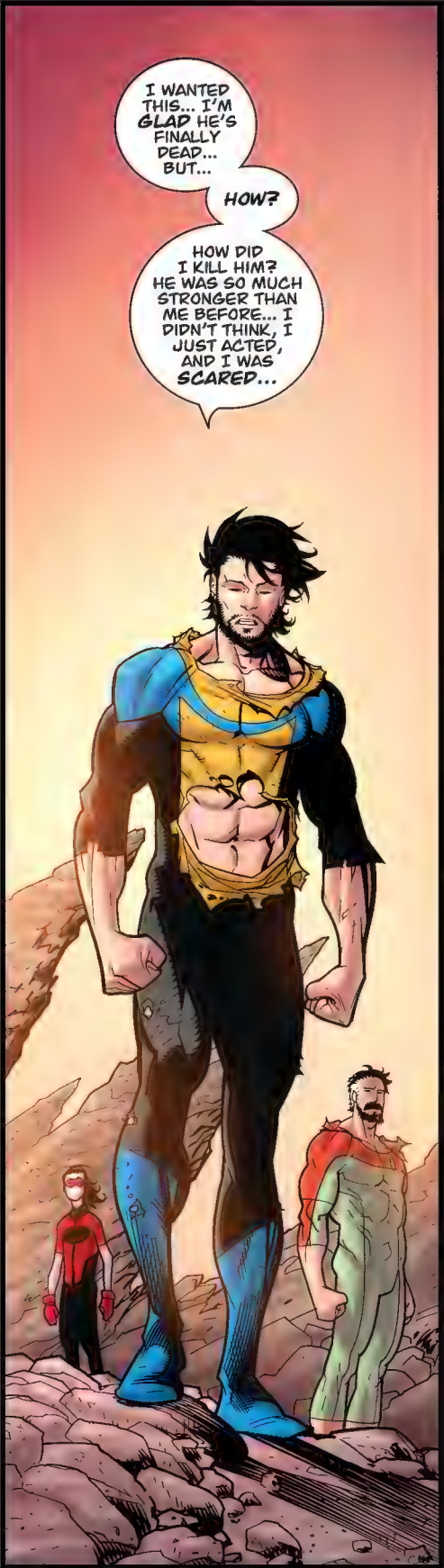
IT'S ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVE. YOU SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY WHEN--

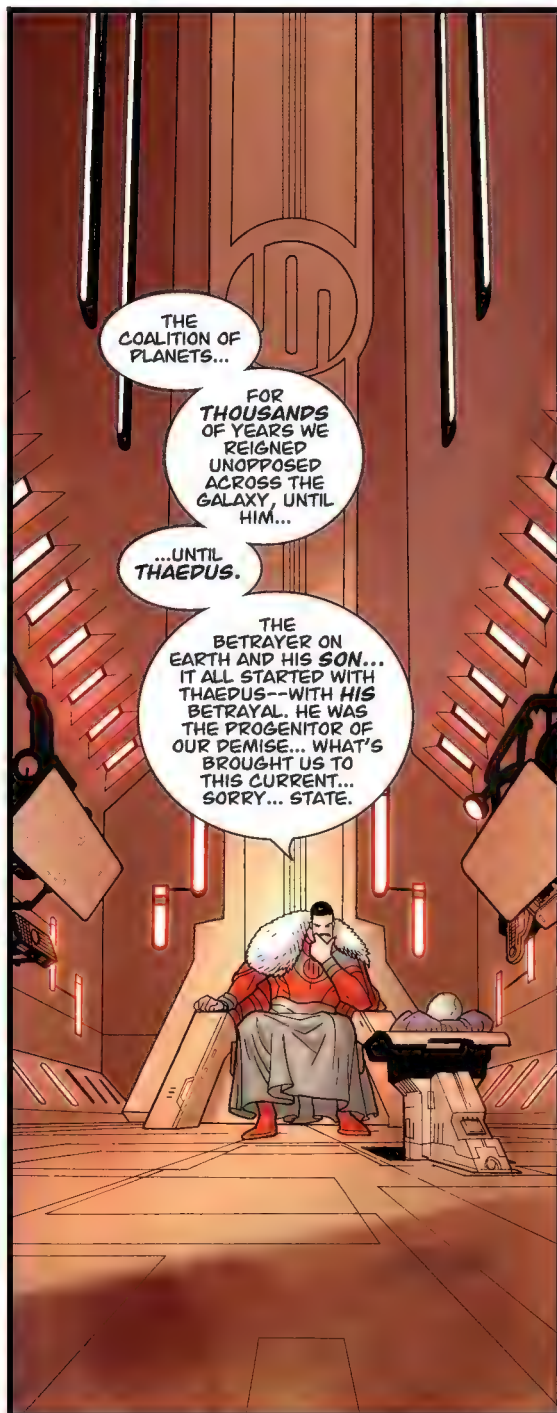
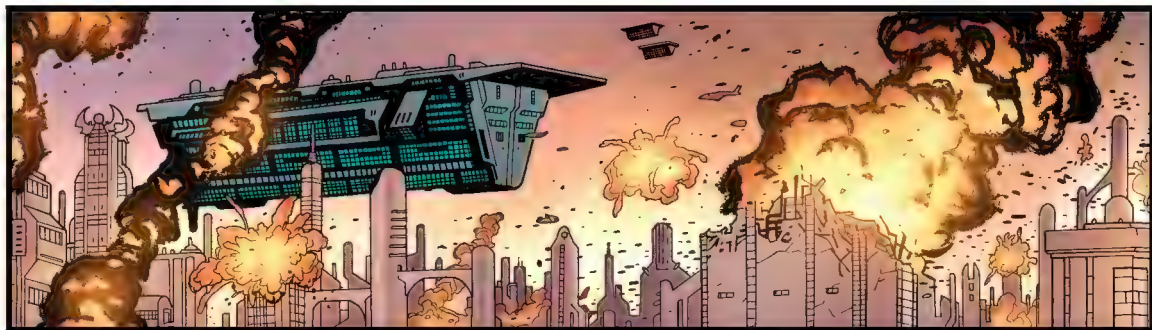
DAD?

AHEAD, IN THE CAMP. WHAT IS--?









THE
COALITION OF
PLANETS...

FOR
THOUSANDS
OF YEARS WE
REIGNED
UNOPPOSED
ACROSS THE
GALAXY, UNTIL
HIM...

...UNTIL
THAEDUS.

THE
BETRAYER ON
EARTH AND HIS SON...
IT ALL STARTED WITH
THAEDUS--WITH HIS
BETRAYAL. HE WAS
THE PROGENITOR OF
OUR DEMISE... WHAT'S
BROUGHT US TO
THIS CURRENT...
SORRY... STATE.

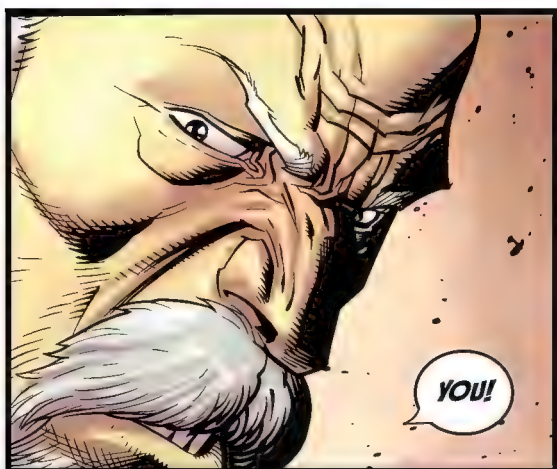
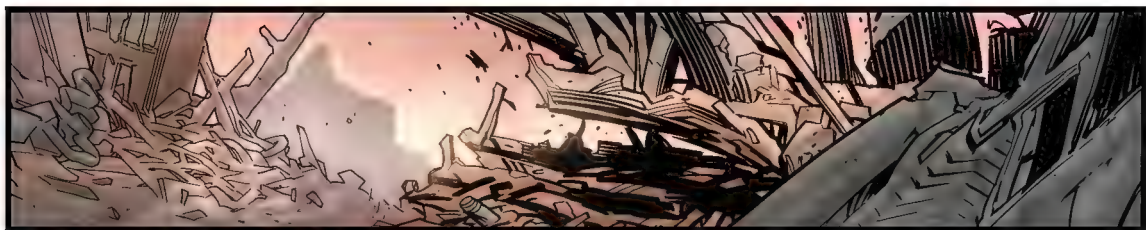
AS THE BATTLE RAGES
ACROSS OUR PLANETS--
OUR CONTROL OF THE
GALAXY BEGINS SLIPPING
THROUGH OUR GRASP--
WE HAVE BROUGHT
THE FIGHT TO HIM...
TO TALESCRIA.

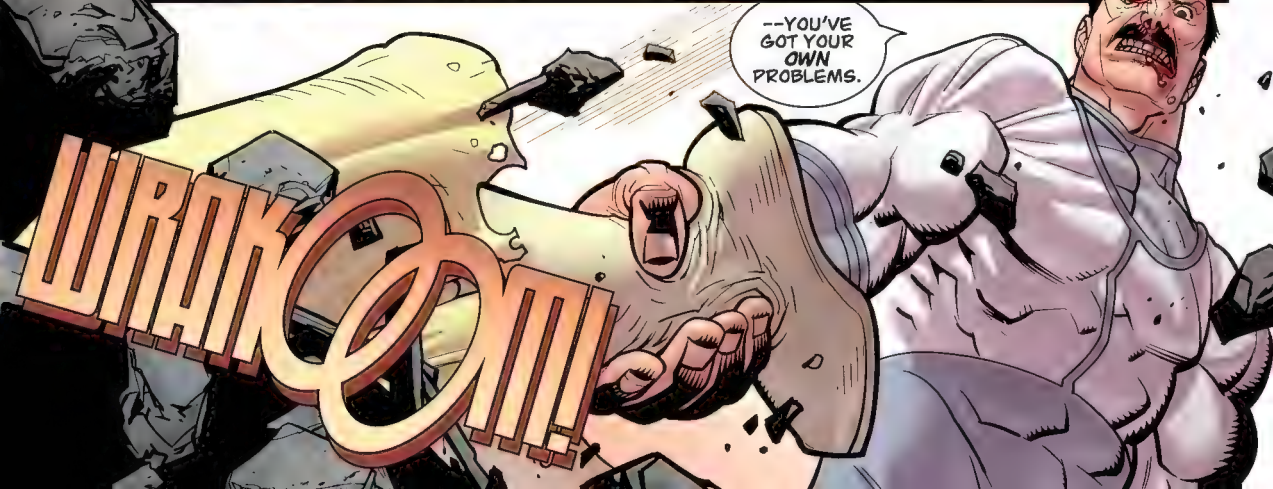
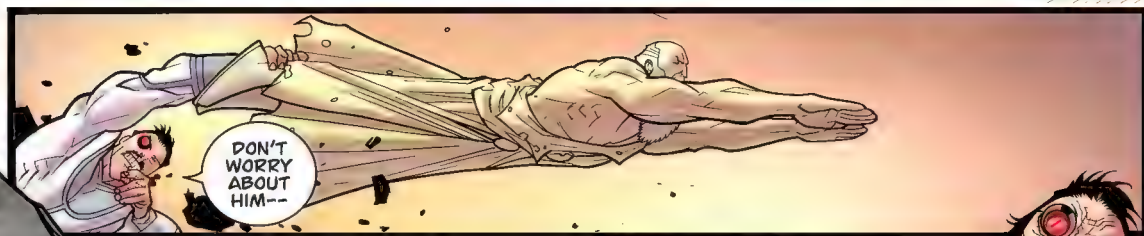
WITH THAEDUS
DEAD AND THE
COALITION IN DISARRAY,
THIS WAR WILL BE
OVER, WE WILL BE
THE VICTORS.

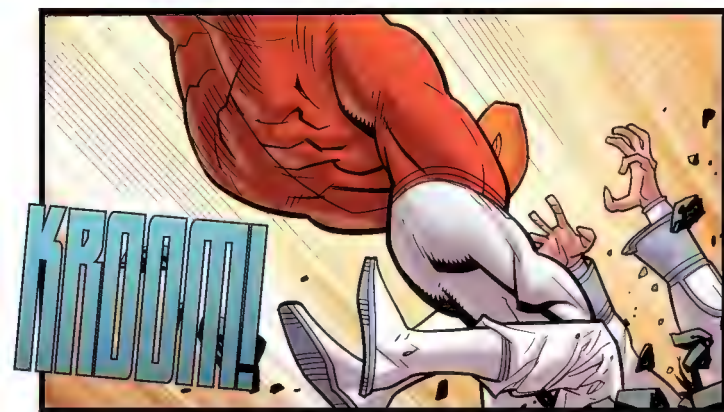
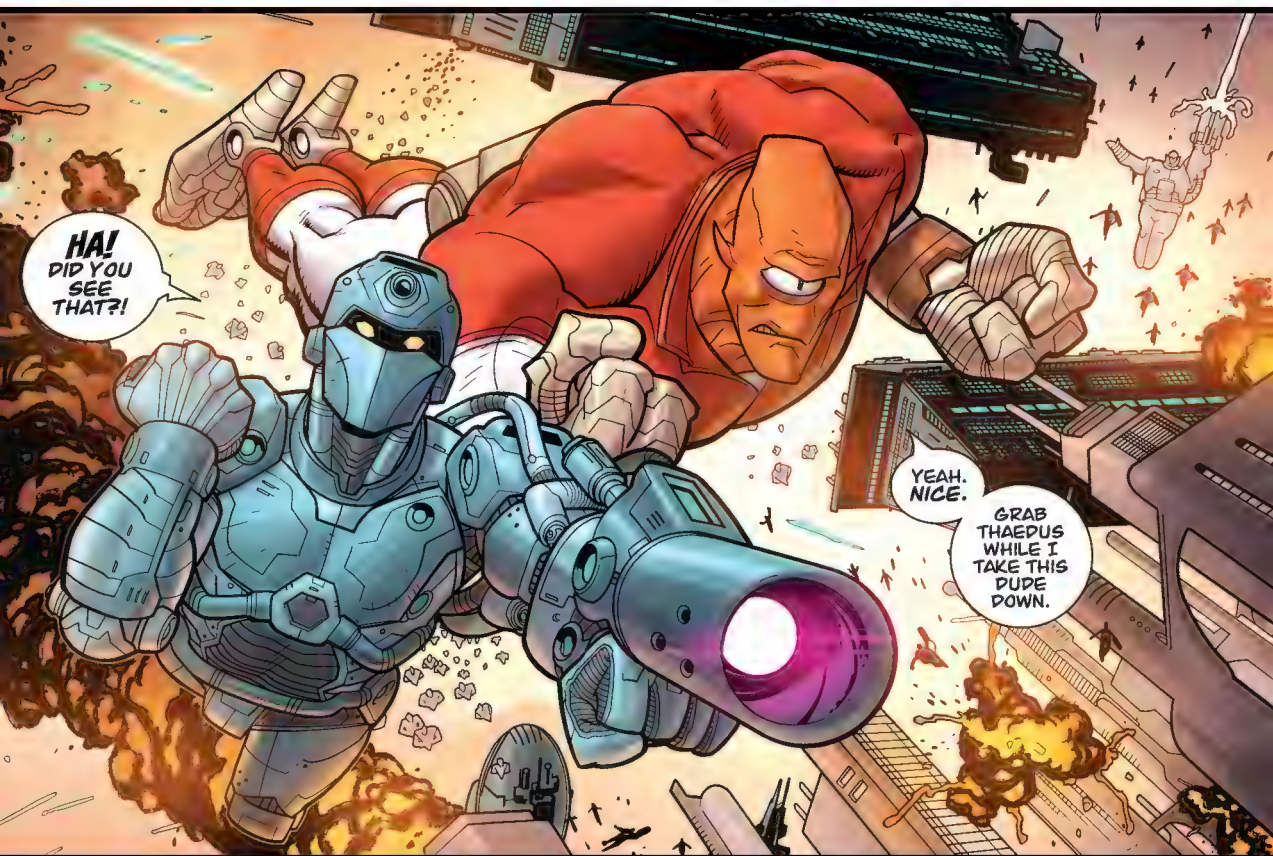
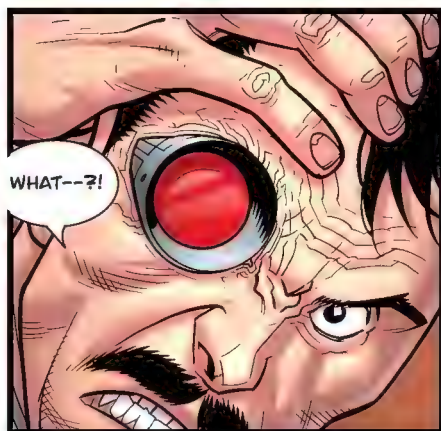
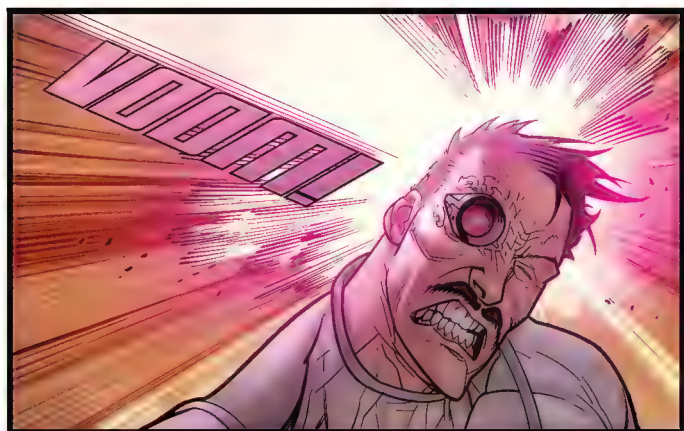
AND
YOU, MY
LIEGE...

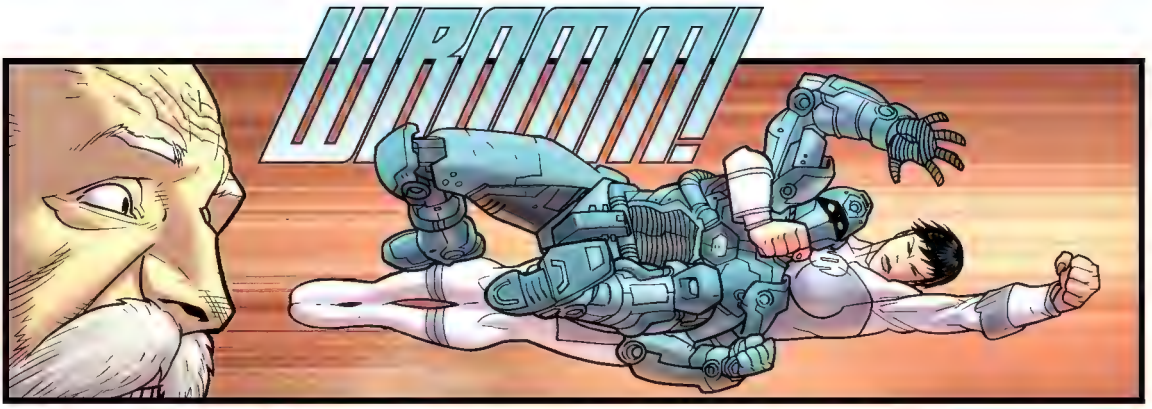


...YOU
WILL BE
AVENGED.



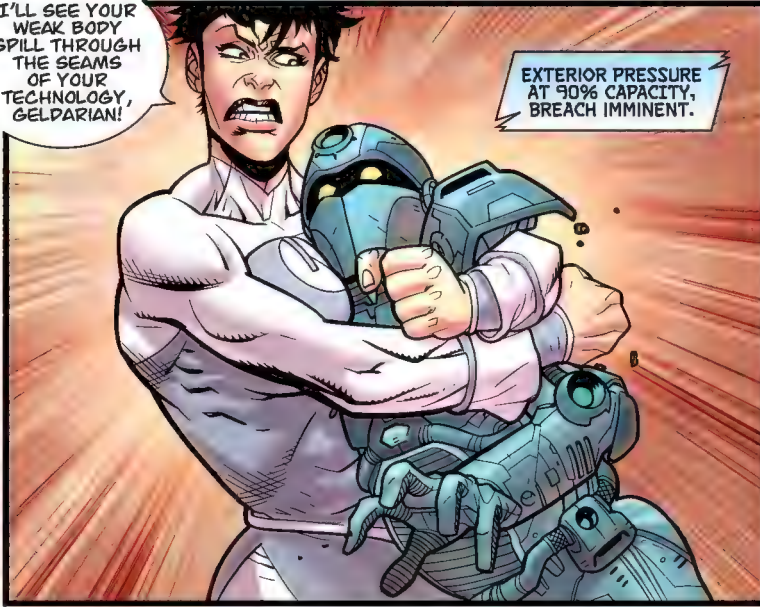






I'LL SEE YOUR WEAK BODY SPILL THROUGH THE SEAMS OF YOUR TECHNOLOGY, GELDARIAN!

EXTERIOR PRESSURE AT 90% CAPACITY, BREACH IMMINENT.



KRAK!

TH--
THANKS...



FOOLISH UNOPAN, YOU DEFY US EVEN AS YOUR BELOVED COALITION CRUMBLES AROUND YOU!

DUDE, YOU'RE CLUELESS--WE'VE GOT YOUR CRAPPY EMPIRE ON THE ROPES!

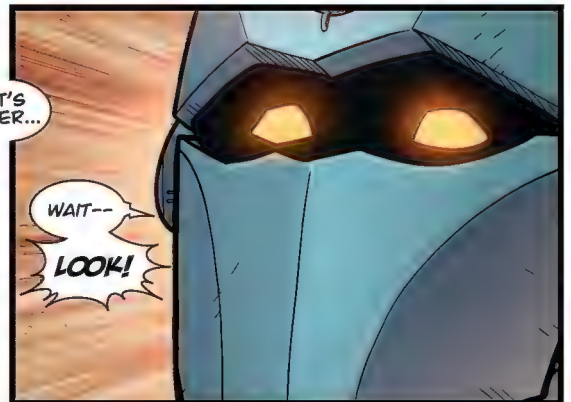


BEFORE SHE GETS UP--WE GOTTA HELP ALLEN.

NO, ALLEN CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF. WE MUST FLEE, GATHER WHAT TROOPS WE CAN TO REGROUP. OUR CAUSE IS ALL BUT LOST.

I NEVER CONSIDERED THEY'D FIND US HERE--I'VE SPREAD US TOO THIN...

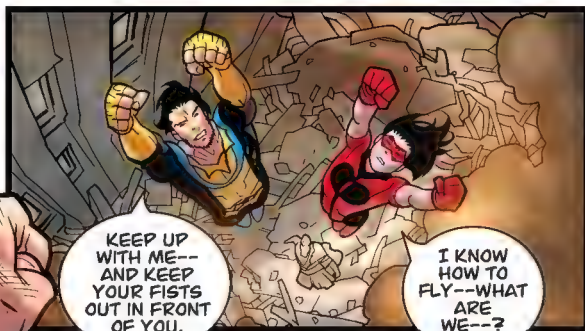
IT'S OVER...

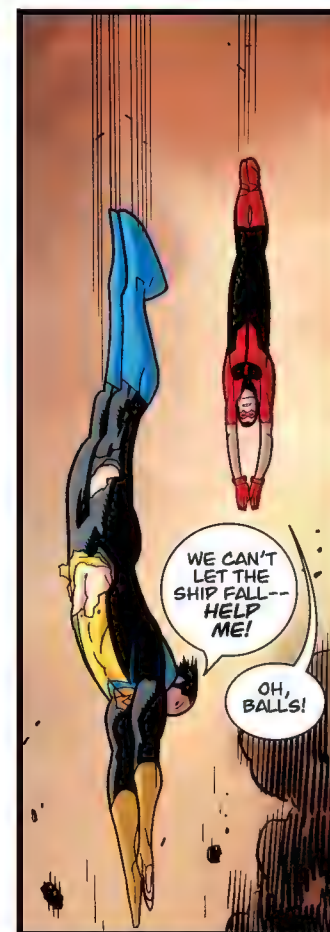
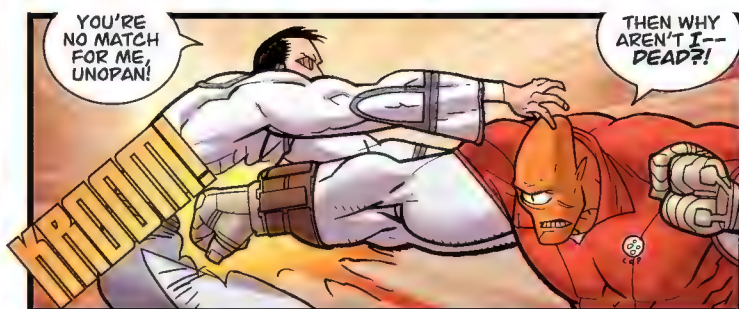
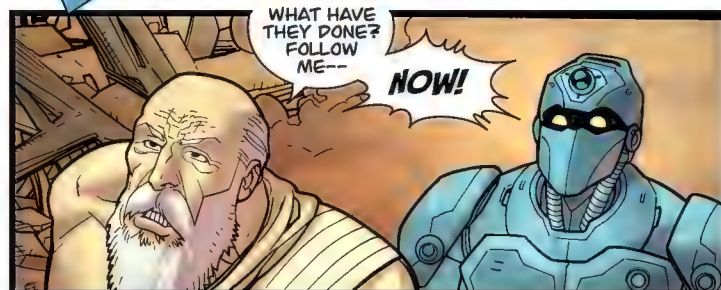


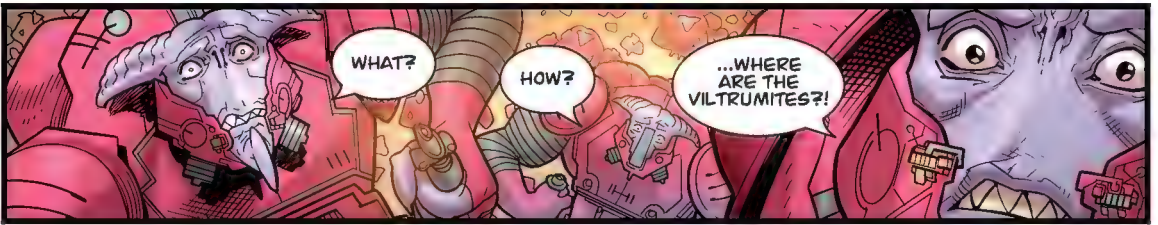
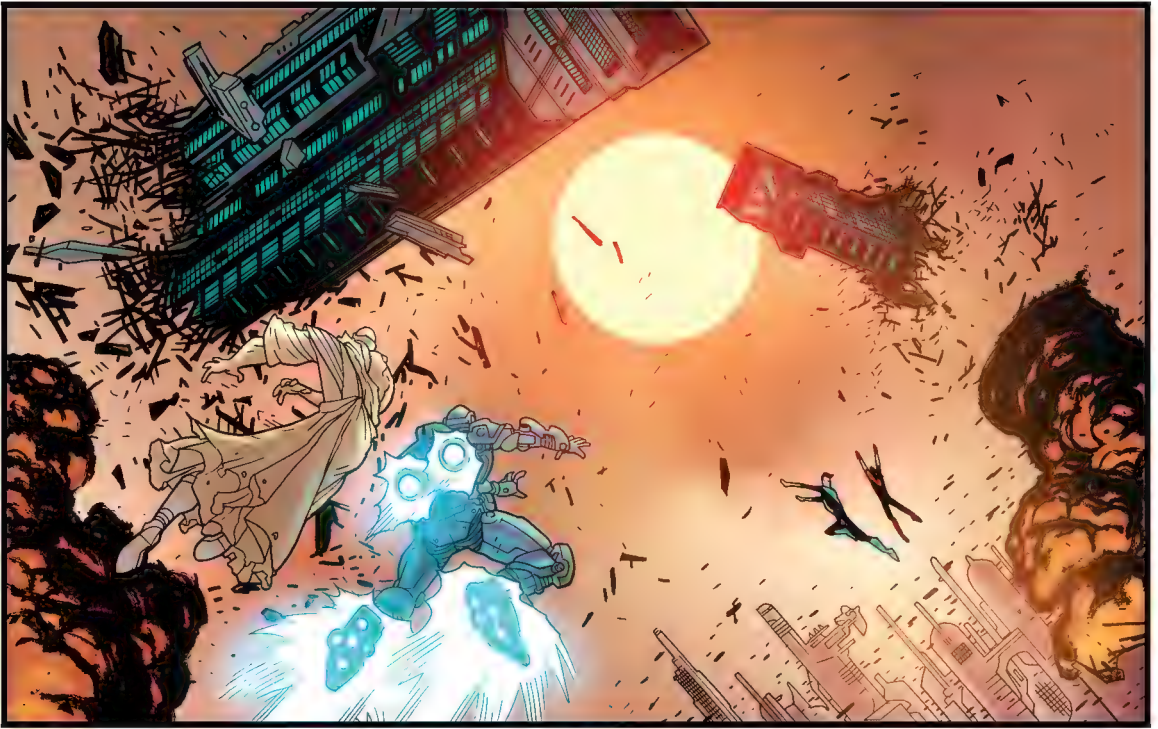
WAIT--

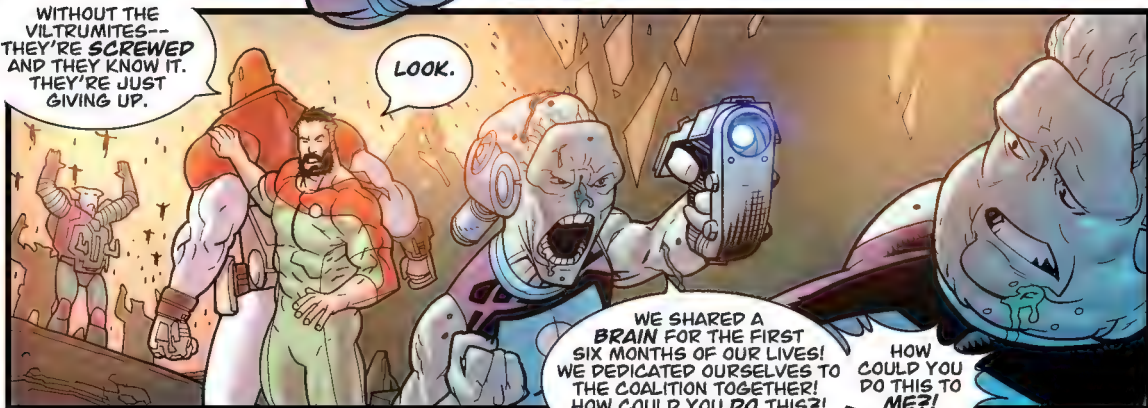
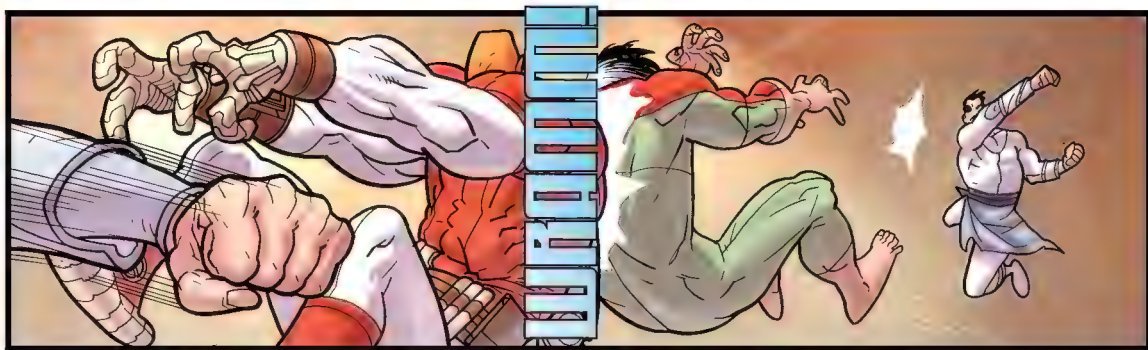
LOOK!













LOOK WHAT YOU MADE
ME DO! YOU THINK I
WANTED THIS?! I CAN'T
BELIEVE YOU WERE
WORKING FOR
THEM!

TALK! TELL ME WHAT THE
VILTRUMITES' PLANS ARE!
TELL ME EVERYTHING
YOU KNOW.



DON'T
MAKE ME
SHOOT YOU
AGAIN!



ENOUGH.

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE--
YOU BROUGHT THEM HERE,
YOU CAUSED THIS
DESTRUCTION--YOU'VE
BETRAYED US ALL.

YOU WILL
PAY FOR THESE
CRIMES--BUT
FIRST, TELL US
WHERE THE
VILTRUMITES ARE
GOING--RIGHT
NOW.

DOESN'T MATTER
NOW--DOESN'T
MATTER AT
ALL.

IT'S TOO
LATE, YOU'VE
GOT NO HOPE
OF WINNING
THIS WAR.
THEY SAID--
THEY--

IF THIS BATTLE
WAS LOST, THEY
WERE TO RECONVENE
ON THE PLANET
VILTRUM TO STAGE
A COUNTER-
ATTACK.

YOU DON'T
STAND A
CHANCE. THEY'RE
ALL GOING
THERE--

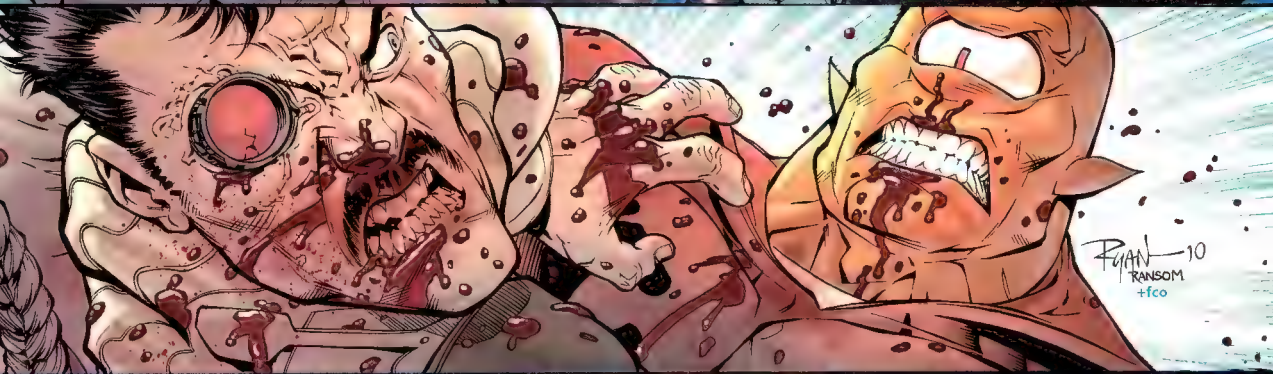
ALL OF
THEM.

IT'S
OVER.



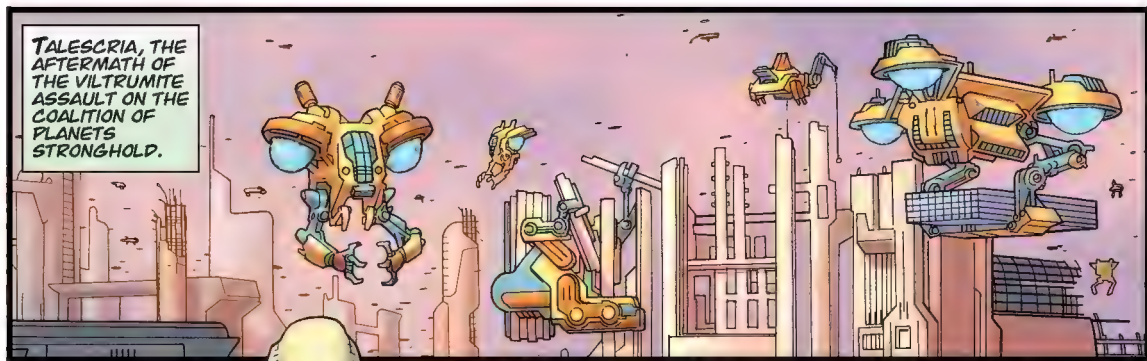


CHAPTER FIVE



Ryan-10
RANSOM
+fco

TALESCRIA, THE AFTERMATH OF THE VILTRUMITE ASSAULT ON THE COALITION OF PLANETS STRONGHOLD.



THE VILTRUMITE WAR IS OVER.

OVER THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WE'VE RECEIVED WORD FROM NEARLY EIGHTY-PERCENT OF THE WORLDS COUNTED AS PART OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.

THEY'VE BEEN ABANDONED BY THEIR VILTRUMITE OVERLORDS. SEEING THAT WE NOW HAVE VILTRUMITES ON OUR SIDE HAS TURNED THEM TO OUR FAVOR.

THEY SEE THE COALITION AS BEING **STRONGER** THAN THE EMPIRE, AND WITHOUT THEIR BOSSES WATCHING OVER THEM...

...THEY'VE SWITCHED SIDES.



BUT WHERE HAVE THESE VILTRUMITES GONE?

THEIR RECENT DISAPPEARANCE SEEMS TO CORROBORATE MY ASSISTANT'S INTEL ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES REGROUPING ON VILTRUM, STAGING ONE FINAL STRIKE AGAINST US.

THIS IS THEIR LAST GASP--AND IT WILL NOT SUCCEED.

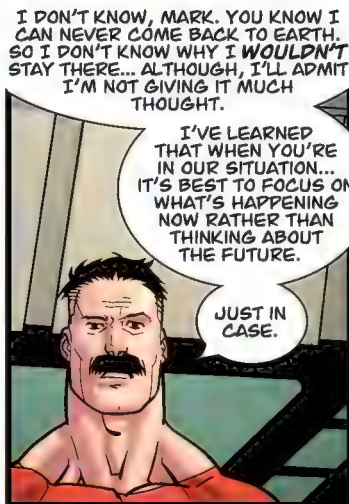
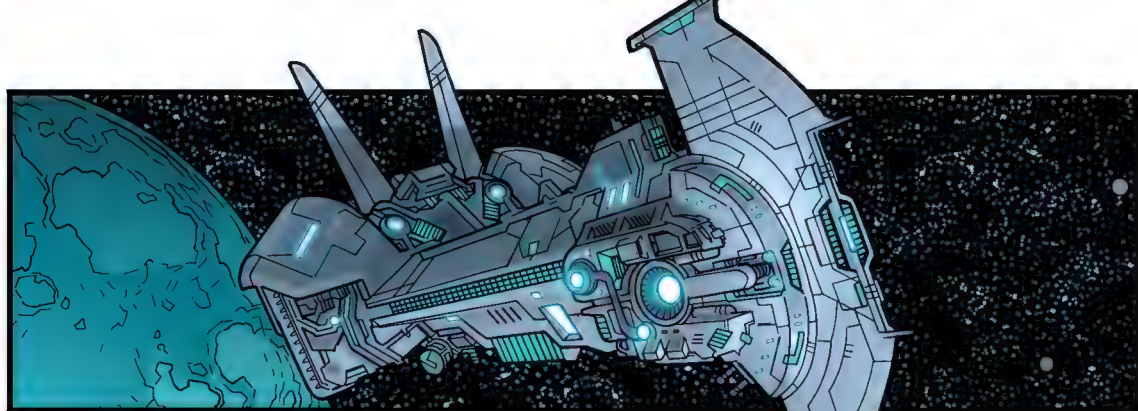
WE WILL LAUNCH A COUNTER-ATTACK. WE WILL STRIKE BEFORE THEY HAVE TIME TO DO ANY PLANNING.

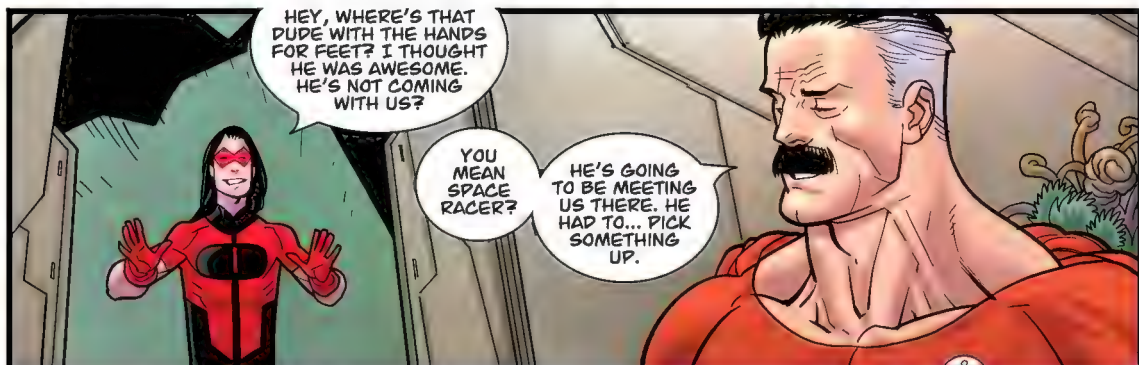
WE WILL MEET THEM ON THEIR HOME TURF AND DESTROY WHAT LITTLE HOPE THEY HAVE OF SUCCEEDING.

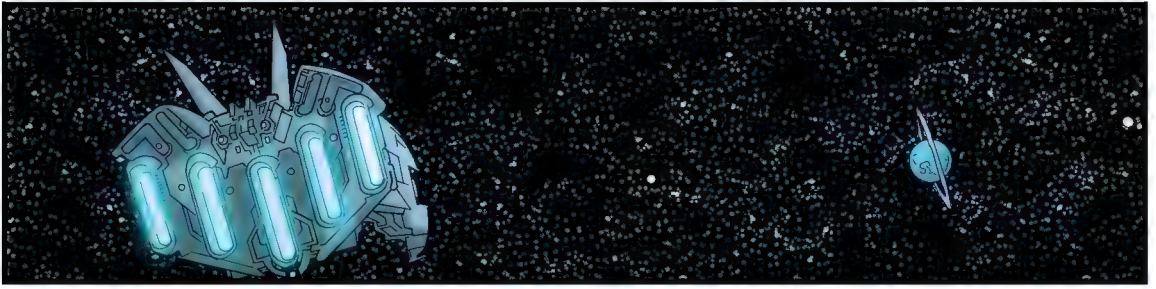


ARE YOU
READY
TO FINISH
THIS?

HELL
YEAH!







WHY DIDN'T WE GO STRAIGHT TO THE PLANET?

THE PLANET VILTRUM IS A TOMB.

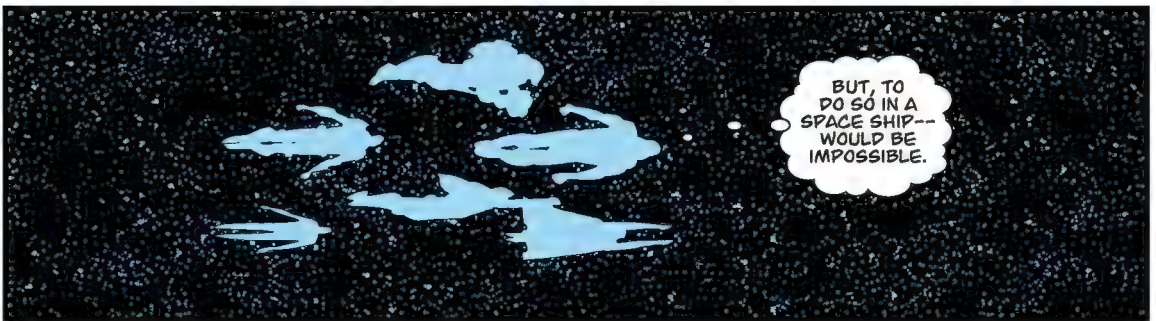
IT'S A MONUMENT TO THOSE WHO FELL VICTIM TO THE SCOURGE VIRUS.



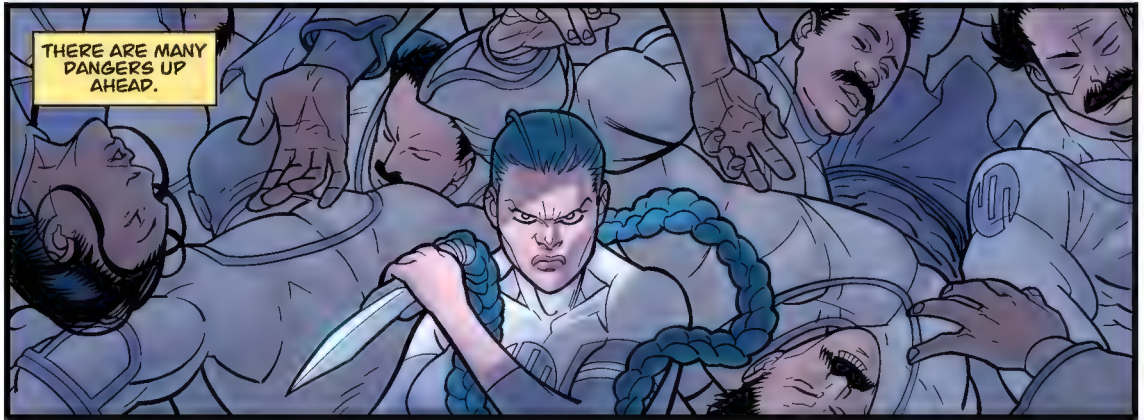
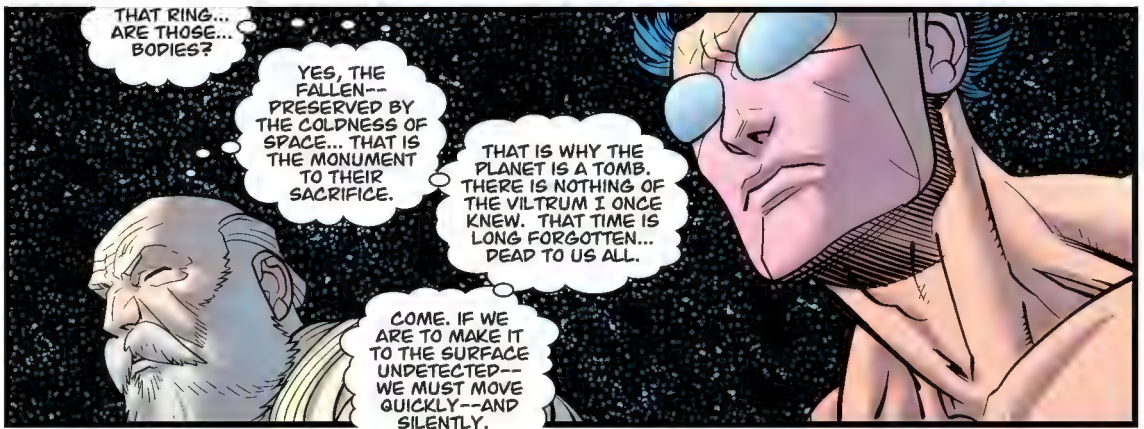
THERE ARE MANY REASONS THE VILTRUMITES WOULD CHOOSE VILTRUM AS A STAGING GROUND.

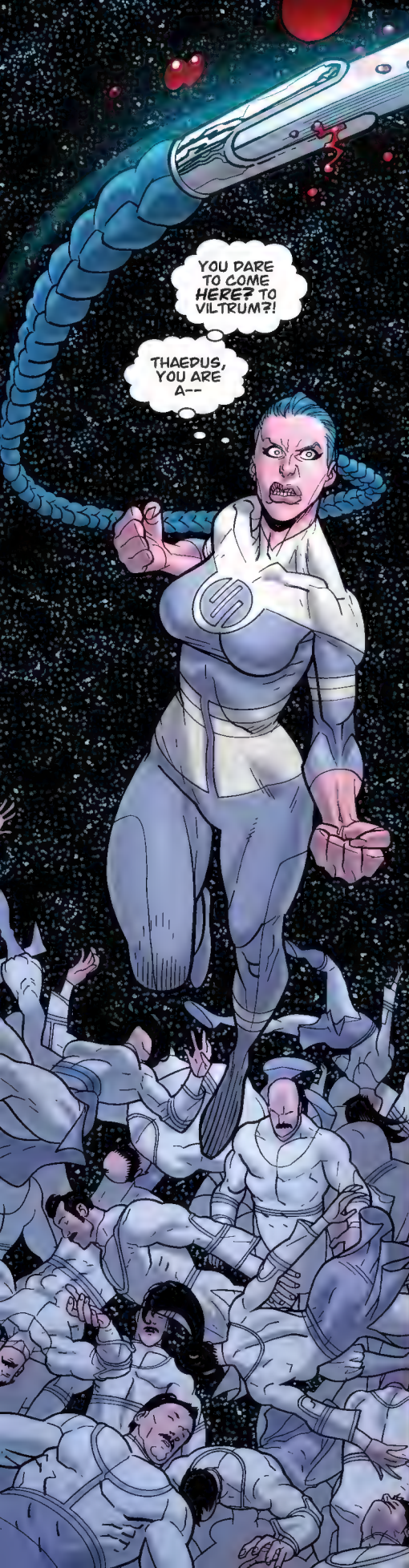
THE SYMBOLISM OF RETURNING TO THE HOME WORLD BEING CHIEF AMONG THEM. BUT AS A MEMORIAL TO THOSE FALLEN, THE PLANET HOUSES A NUMBER OF DEFENSES.

IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE OUR WAY TO THE PLANET ON OUR OWN LIKE THIS...



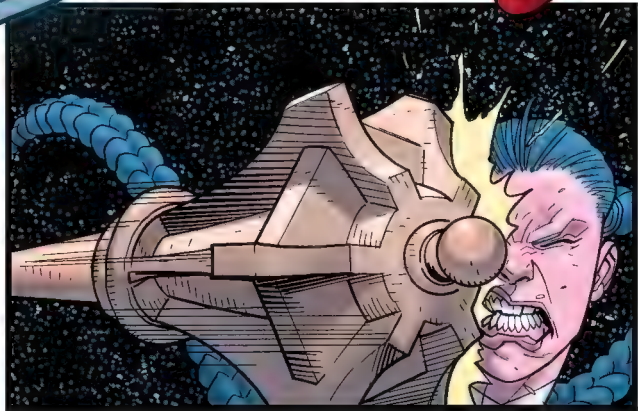
BUT, TO DO SO IN A SPACE SHIP-- WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE.





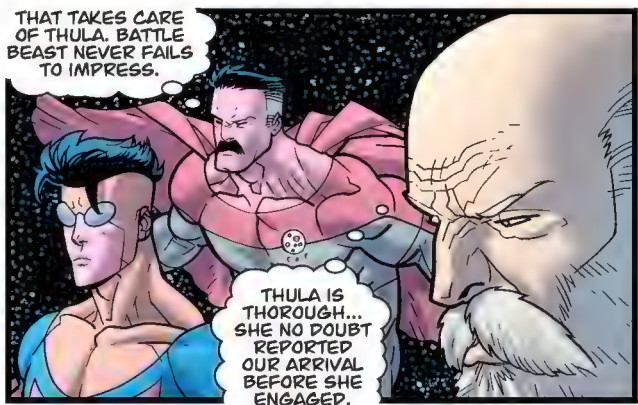
YOU DARE
TO COME
HERE? TO
VILTRUM?!

THAEDUS,
YOU ARE
A--



TOO MUCH
THINKING!
MORE
FIGHTING!

MORE!



THAT TAKES CARE
OF THULA. BATTLE
BEAST NEVER FAILS
TO IMPRESS.

THULA IS
THOROUGH...
SHE NO DOUBT
REPORTED
OUR ARRIVAL
BEFORE SHE
ENGAGED.



LOOKS
LIKE IT!

OKAY...
THIS IS IT,
EVERYONE.

GET
READY.



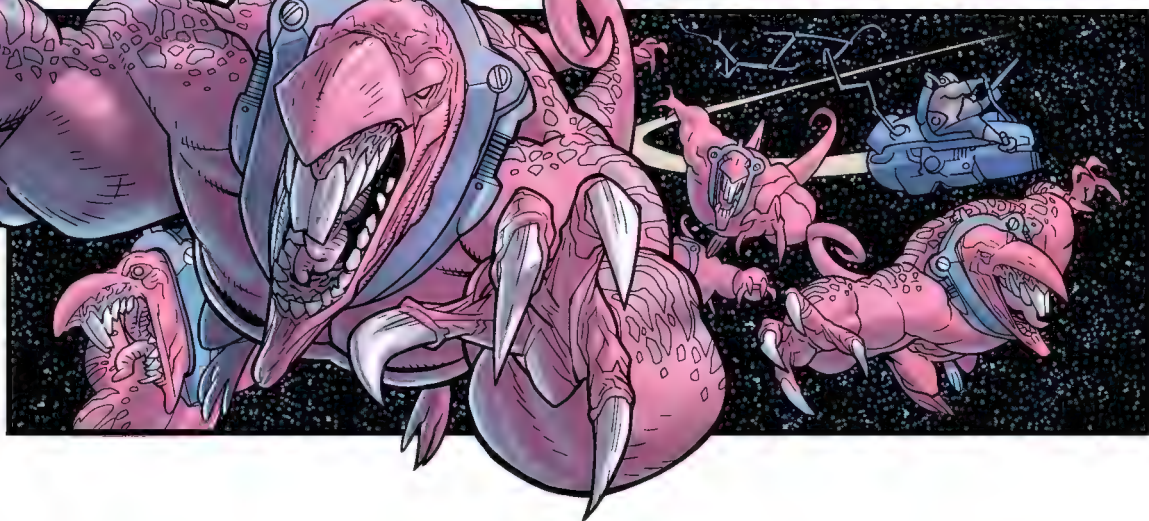
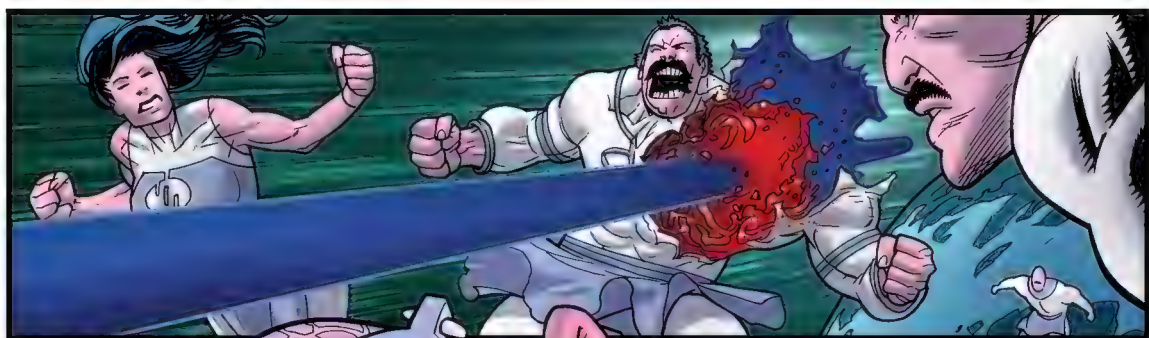
TO ALL
WHO MAKE
THEMSELVES
ENEMIES OF
THE VILTRUM
EMPIRE--!

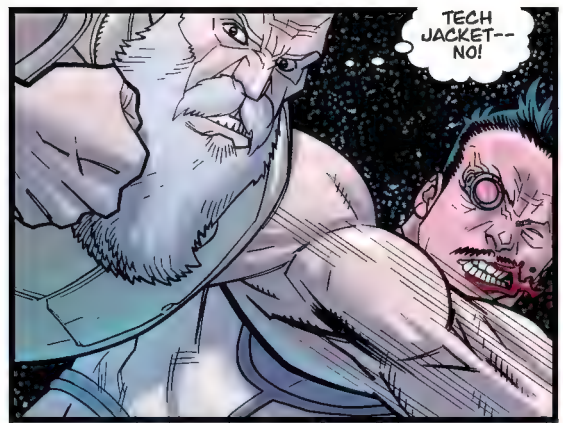
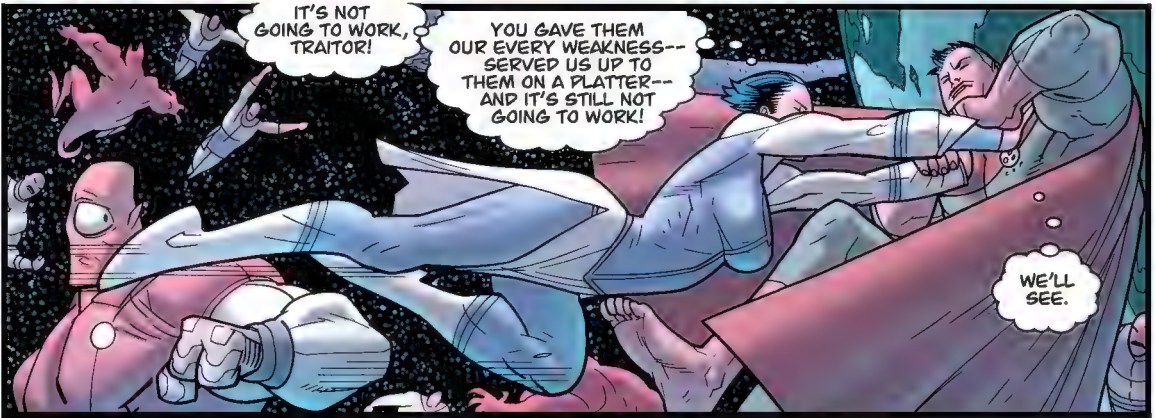
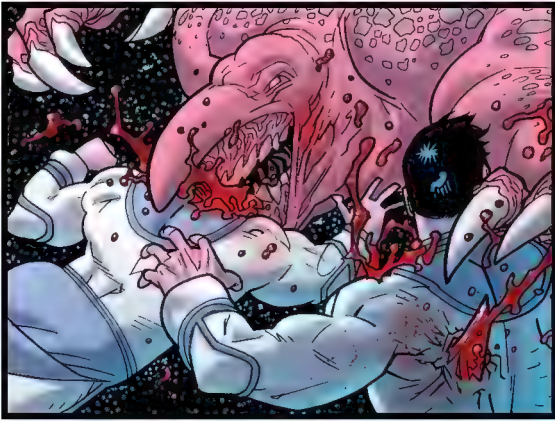
PREPARE
FOR YOUR
DEATHS!

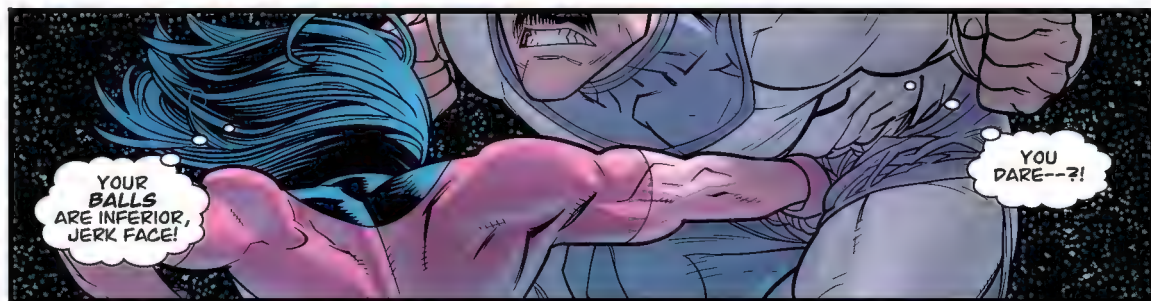
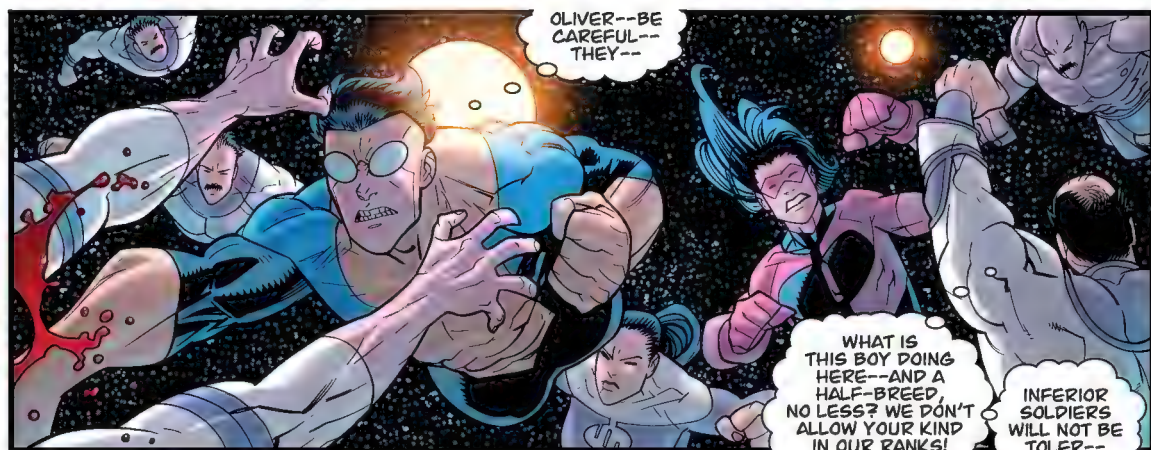
WE ARE GROSSLY
OUT-NUMBERED...
MOVE FAST FROM
OPPONENT TO OPPONENT.
TRY NOT TO LET THEM
OVERPOWER YOU--WE'RE
GOING TO NEED TO MOVE
QUICKLY IF WE'RE TO
SURVIVE THIS.



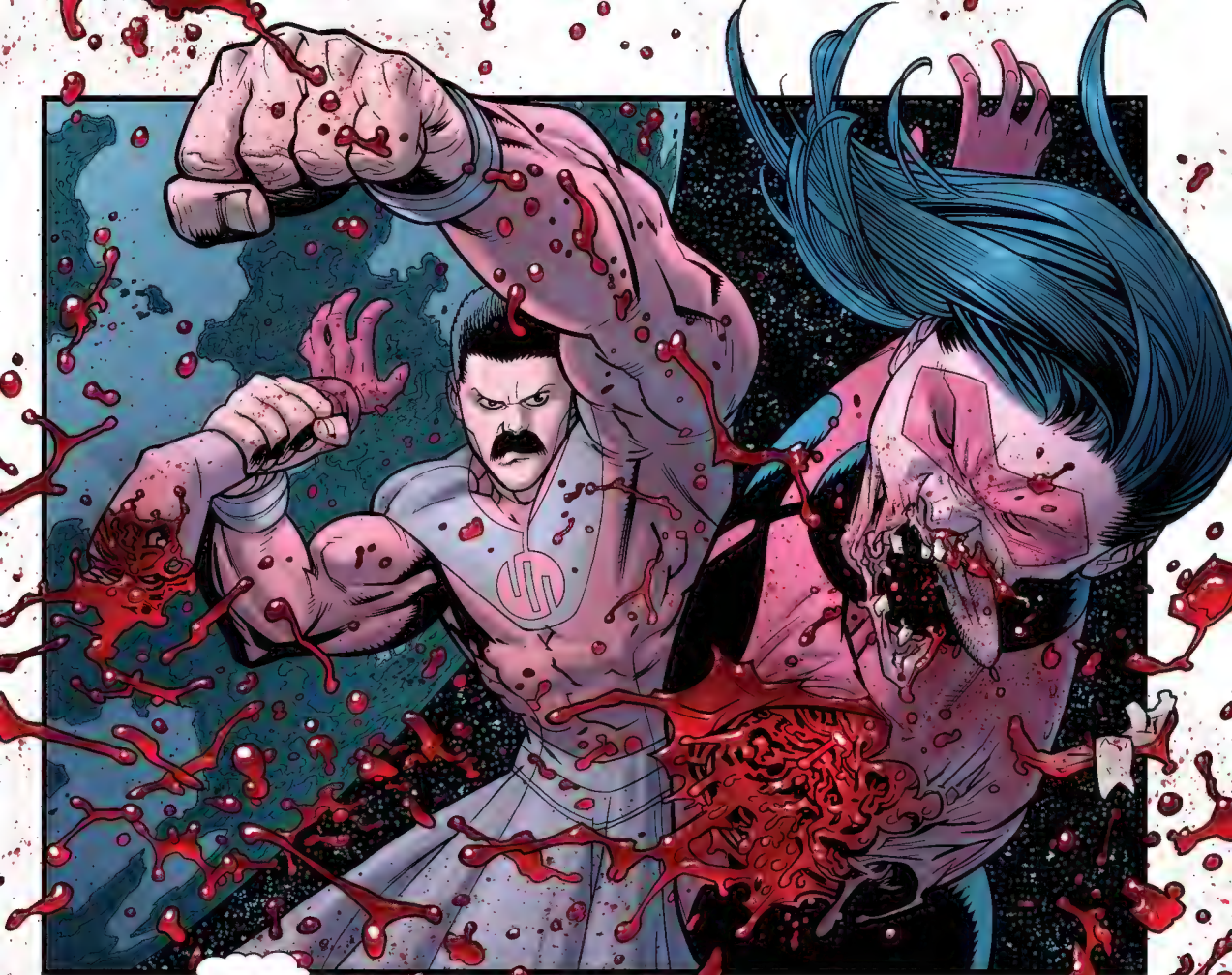
IF ONLY
SPACE
RACER
COULD--











OLIVER!

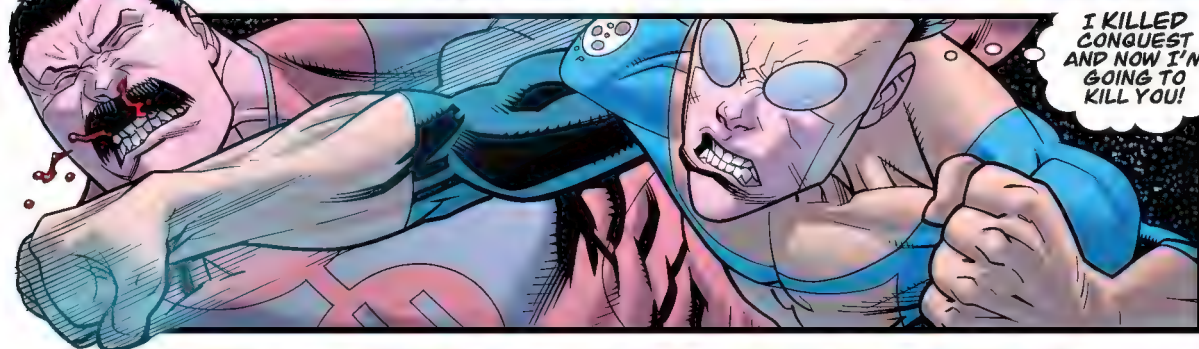
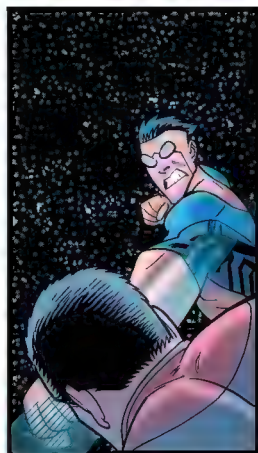
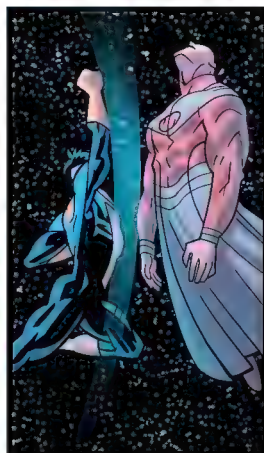
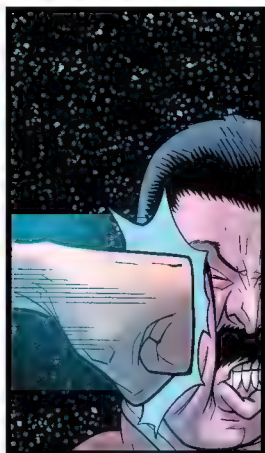
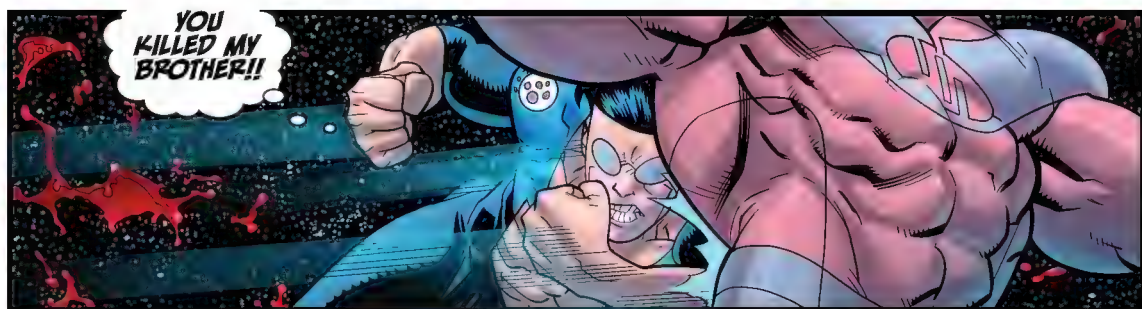


GET
BACK
HERE!

SEEMED
LIKE SUCH
A NICE
BOY...



MY
BROTHER...



WHAT HE SAYS
IS TRUE--MY
SON KILLED
CONQUEST!

STILL SO
CONFIDENT
IN YOUR
VICTORY?

NOW,
WHILE THEY'RE
DISTRACTED--
WE HAVE TO MAKE A
MOVE--SOMETHING
THEY WON'T
EXPECT.

SPACE
RACER--
TO ME!

YES!

YES!!

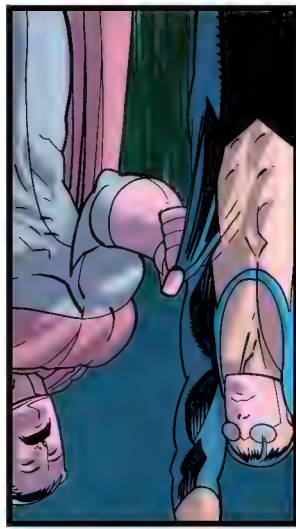
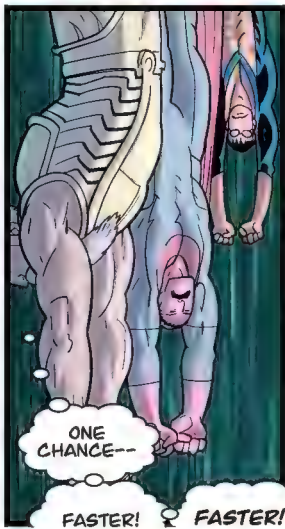
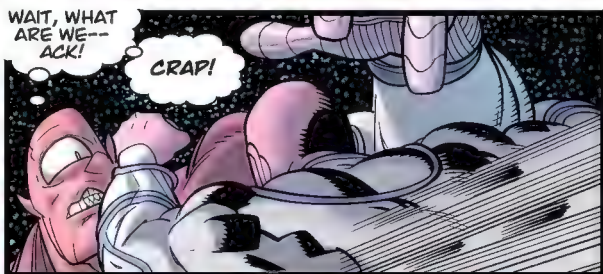
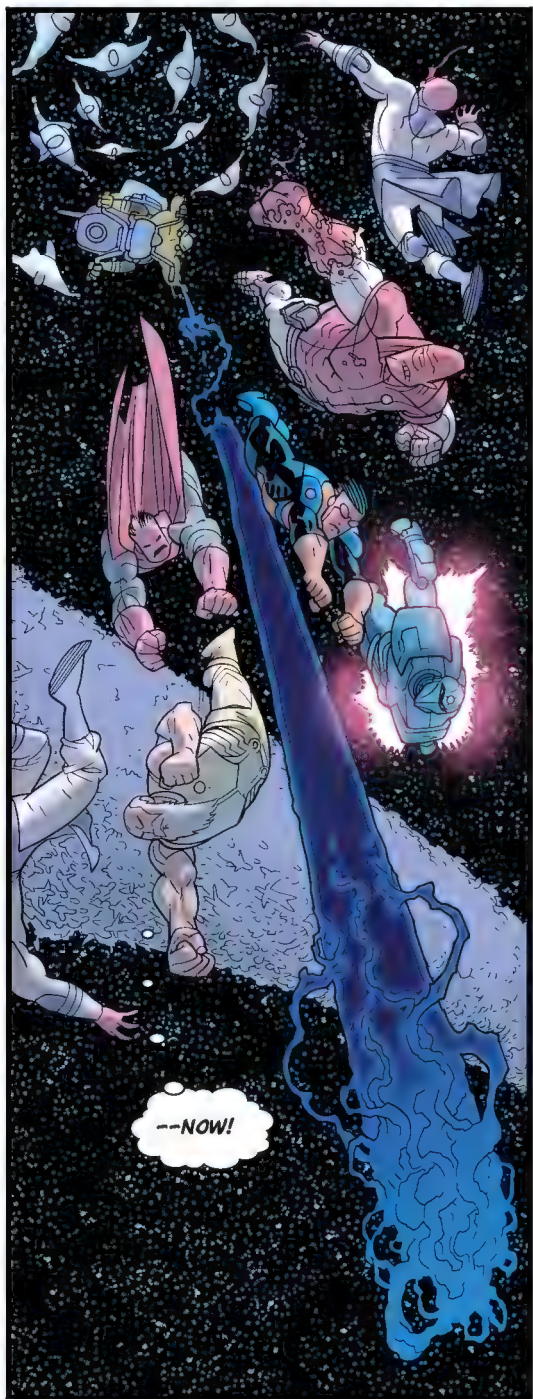
WHAT'S
GOING
ON OVER
THERE?

BEATS
ME.

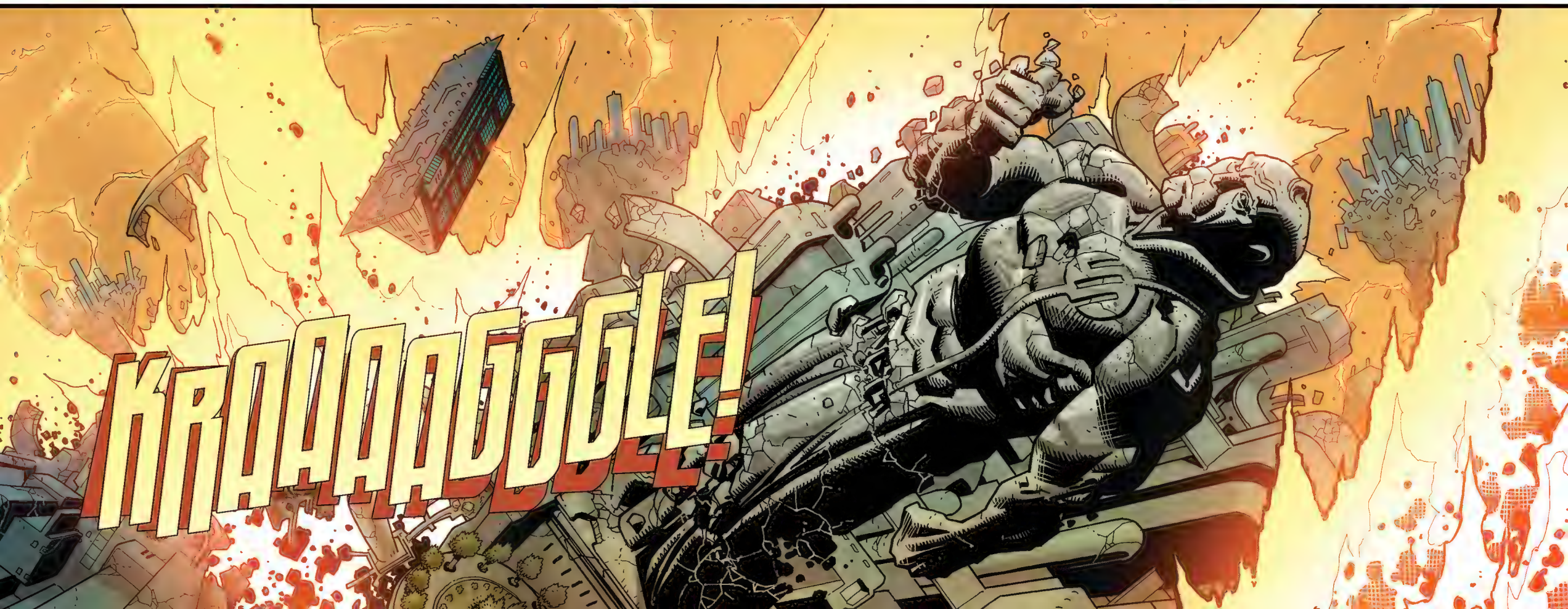
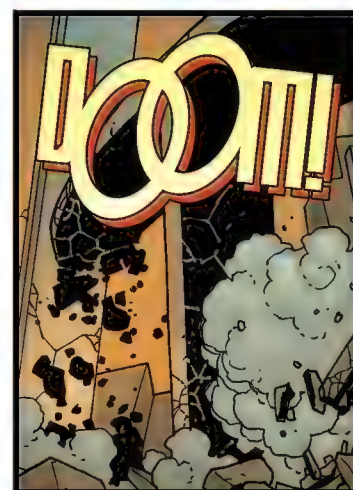
ALL OF
YOU--
WITH ME--
NOW!

WE'LL
ONLY GET
ONE SHOT
AT THIS!

SPACE
RACER--
DEAD CENTER,
FIRE YOUR
GUN--













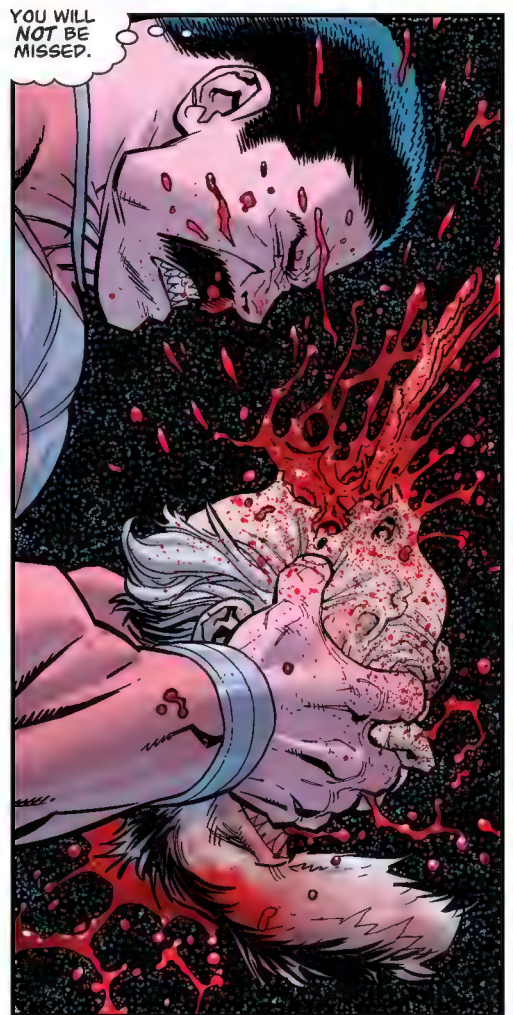
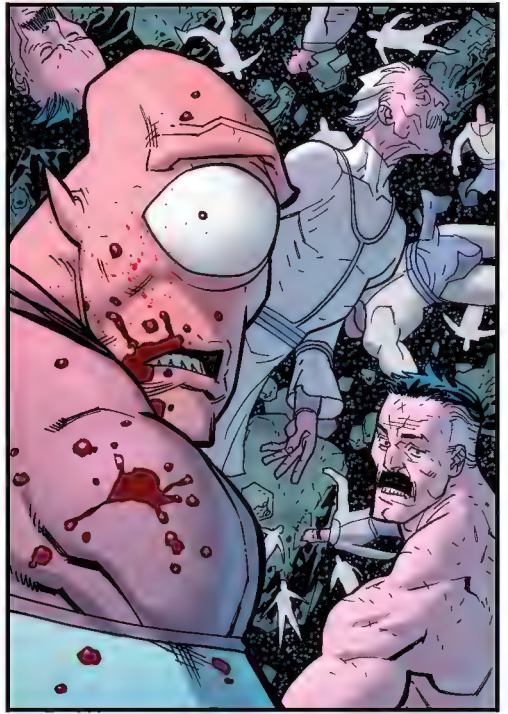
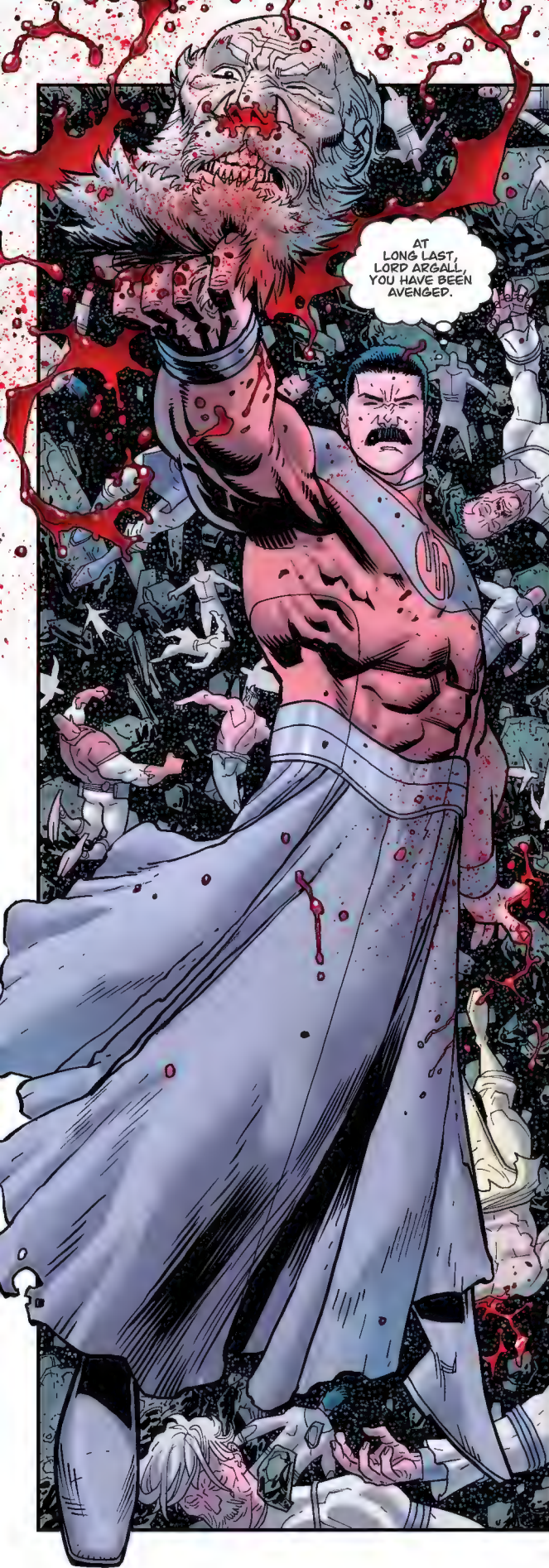


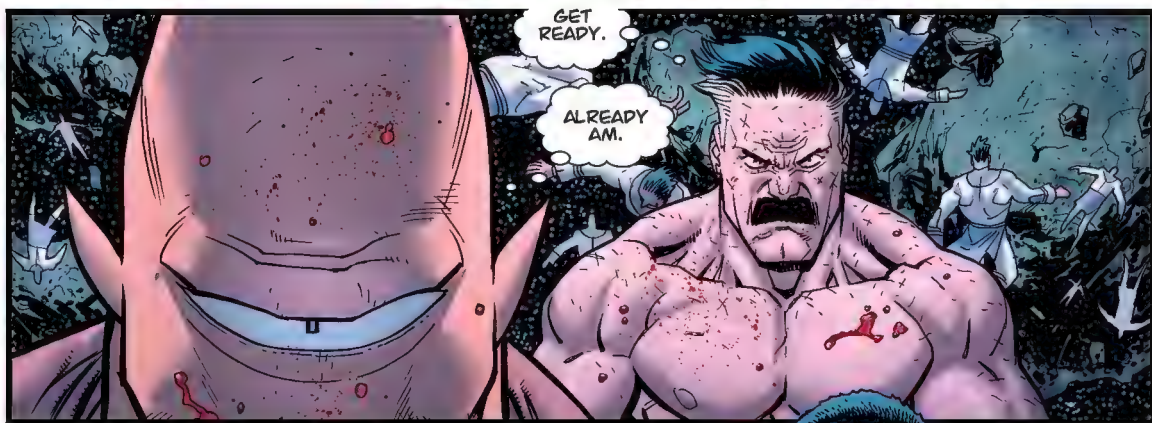
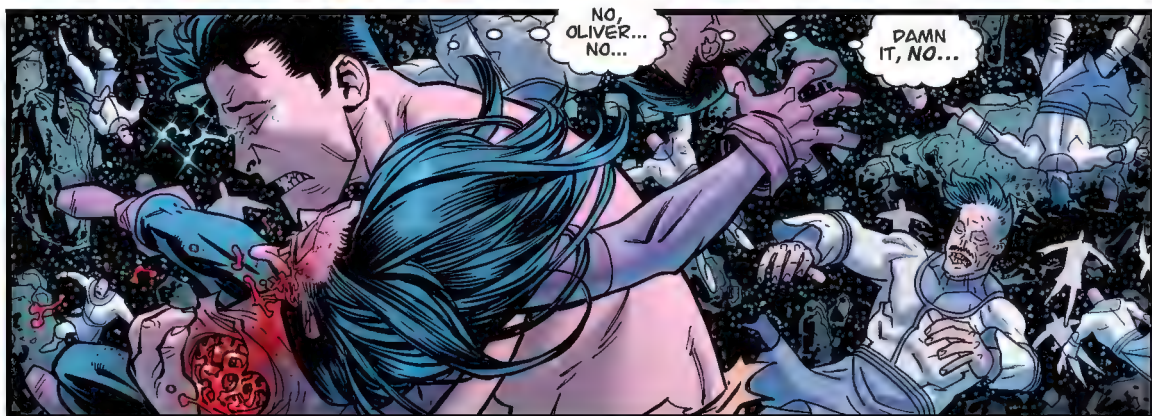
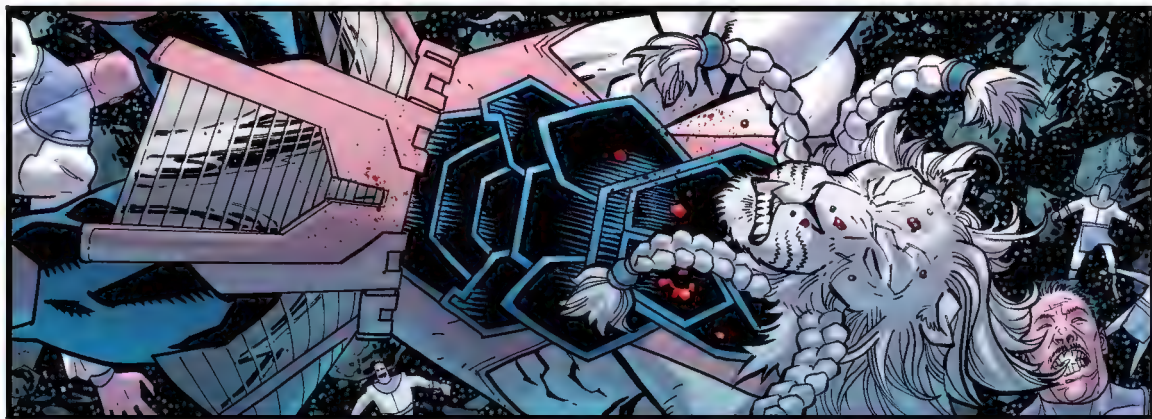






...BUT
REVENGE!







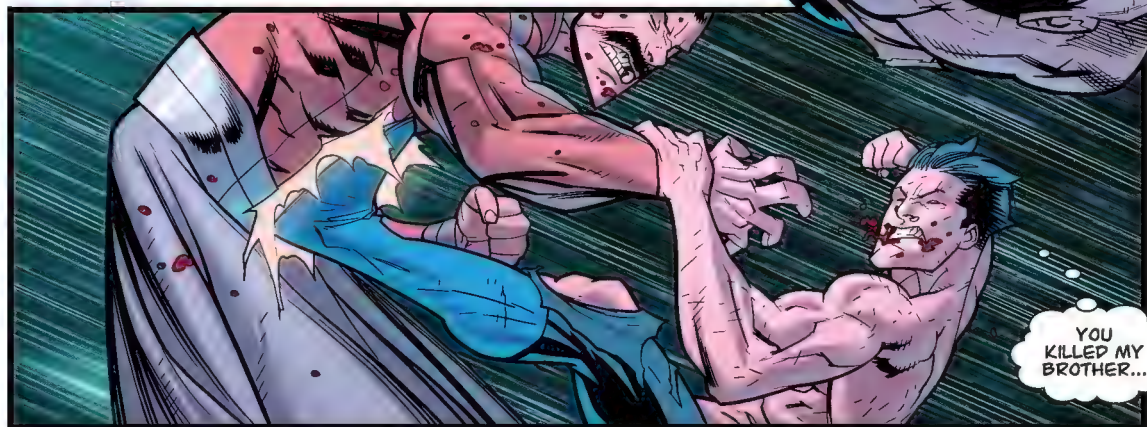
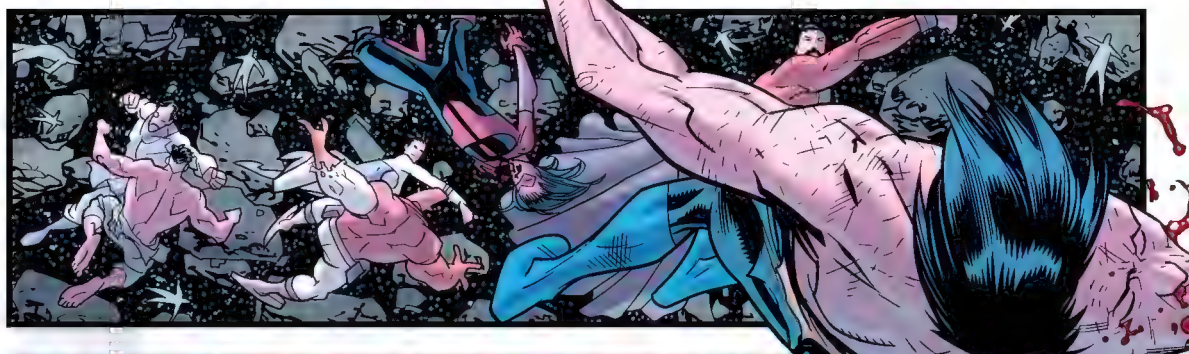
YOU
ARE ALL
NEXT.

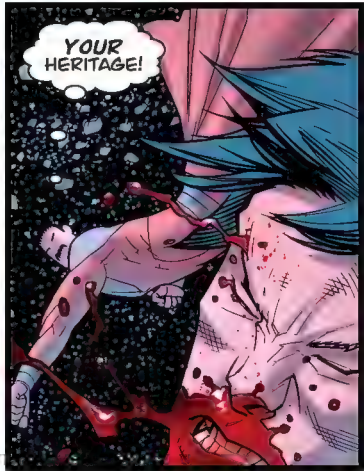
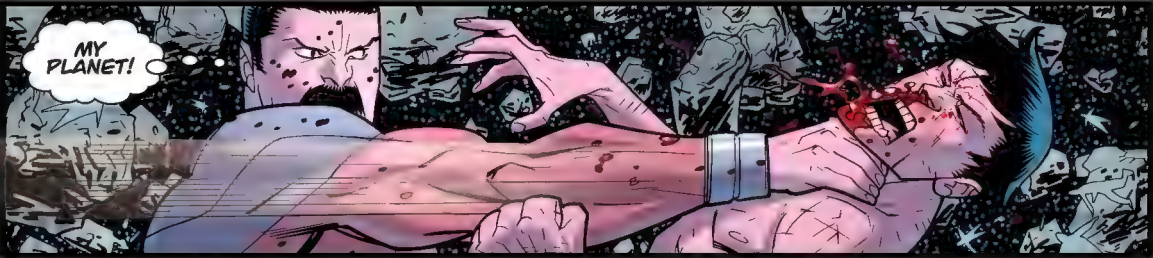
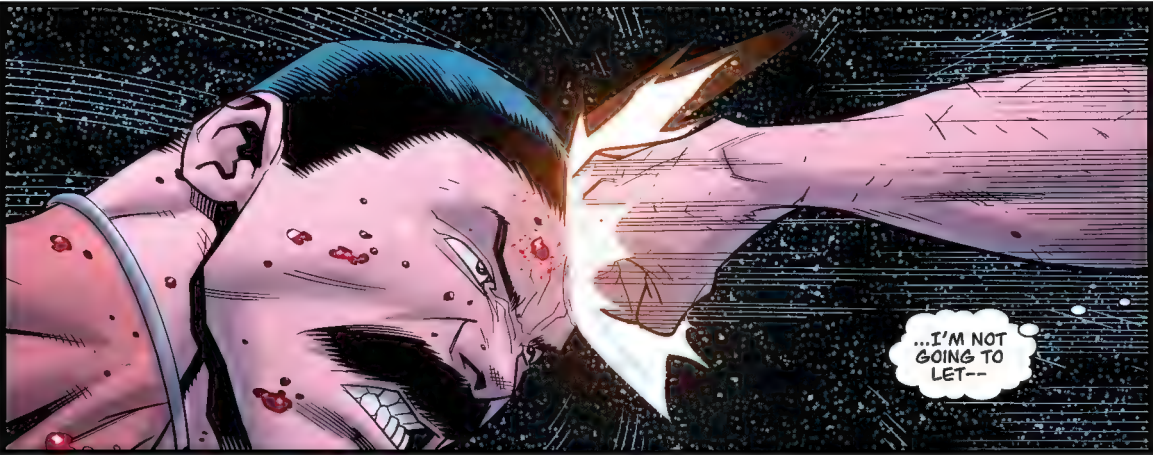


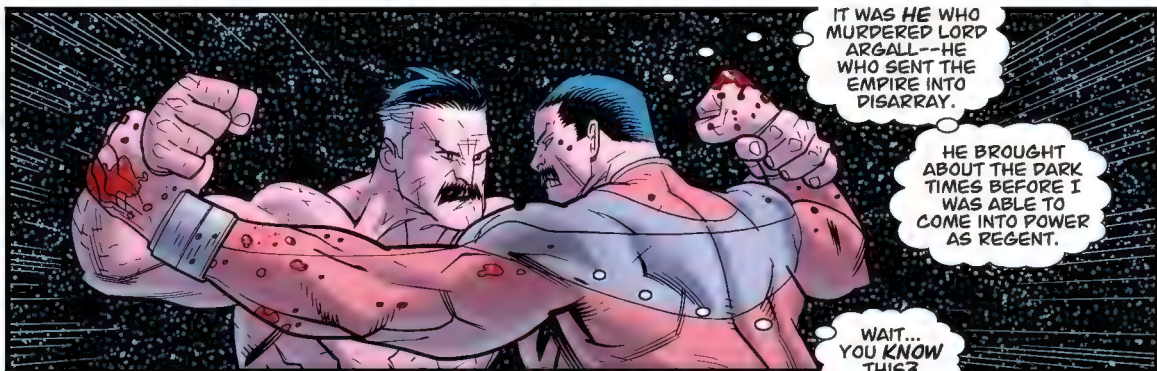
CHAPTER SIX

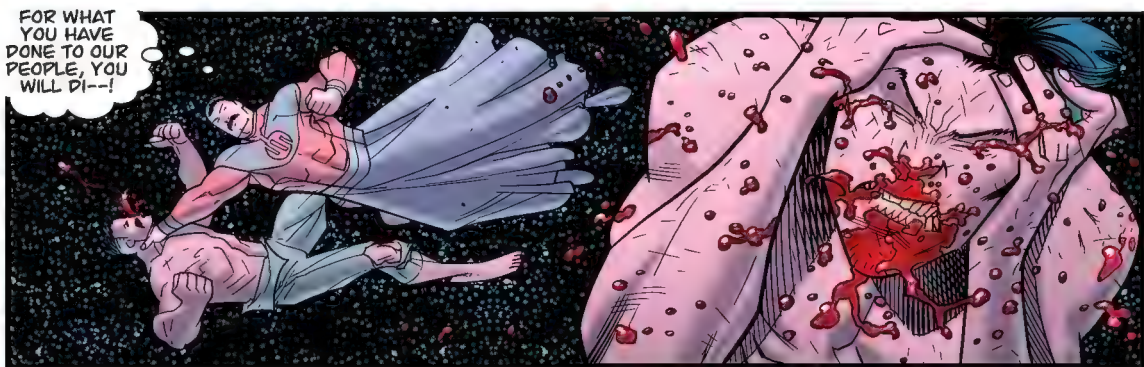
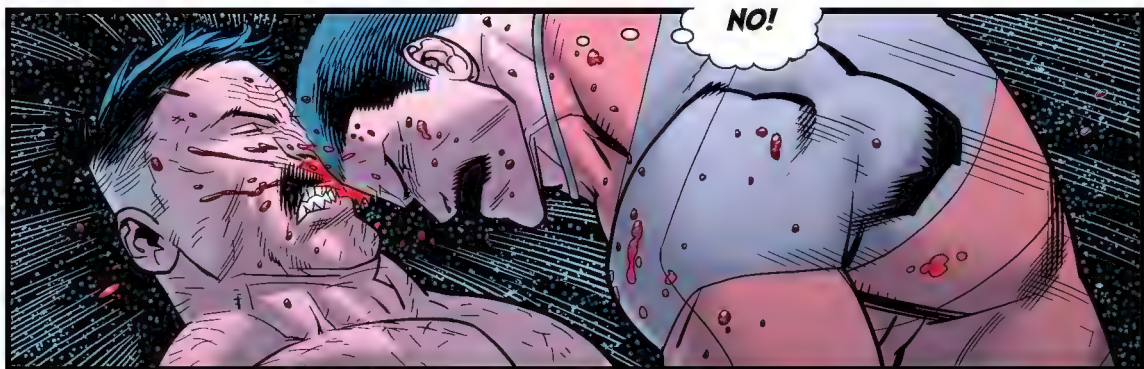


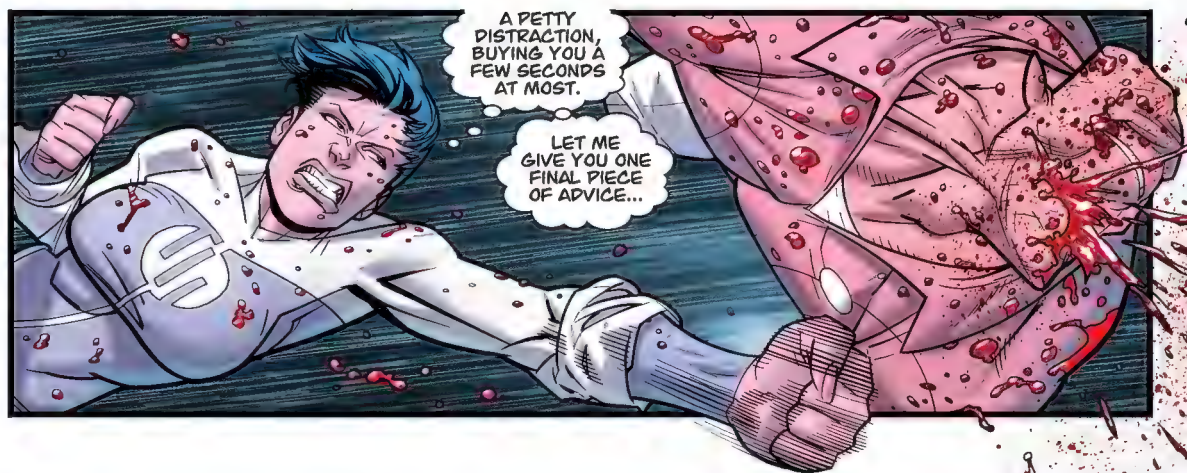
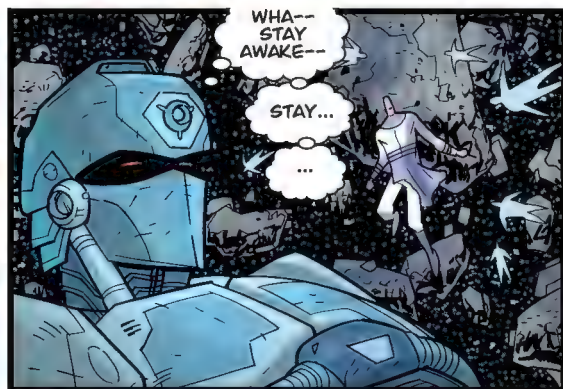
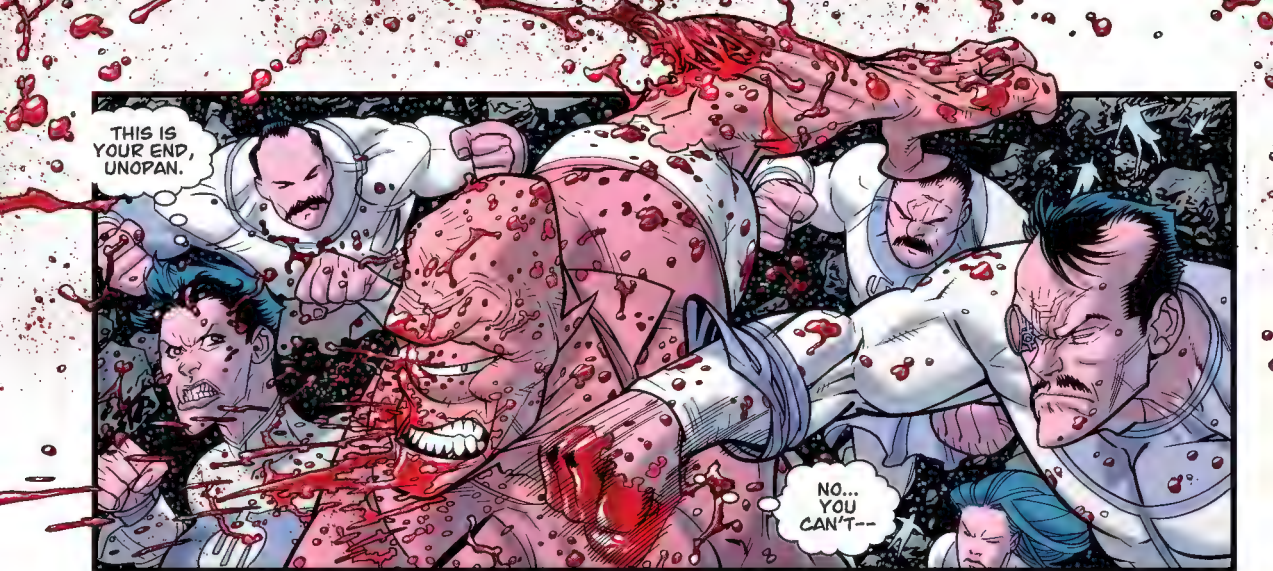
PYAN

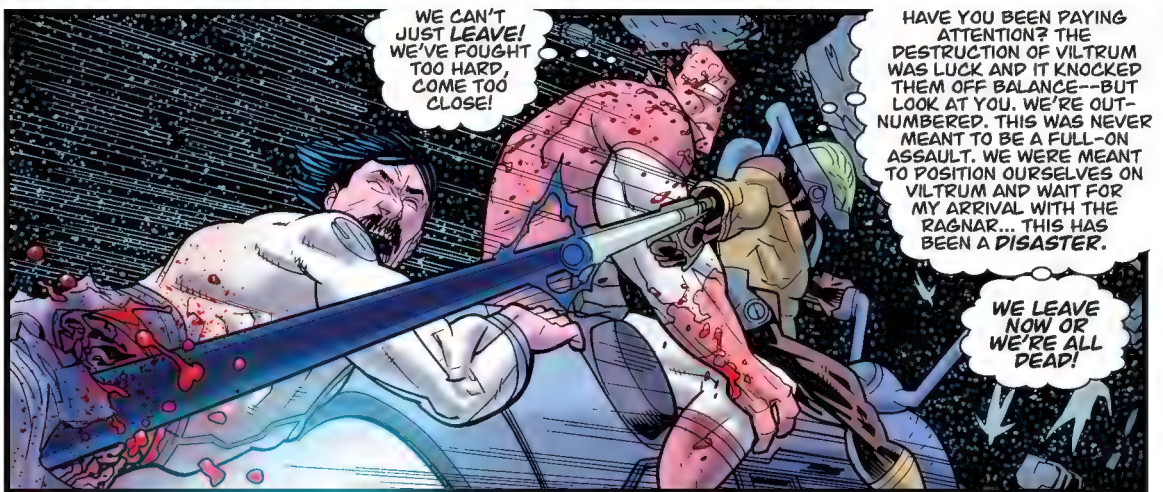
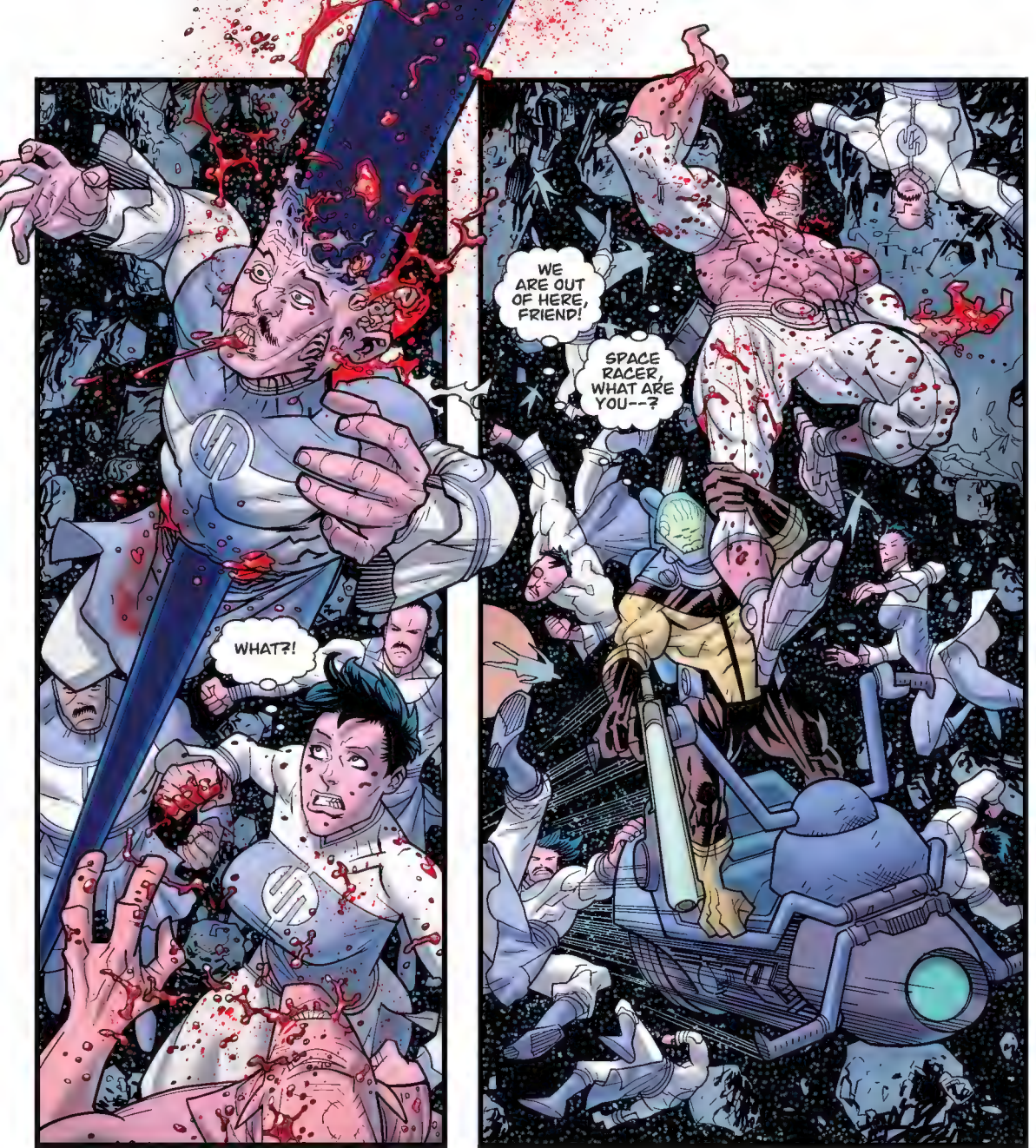


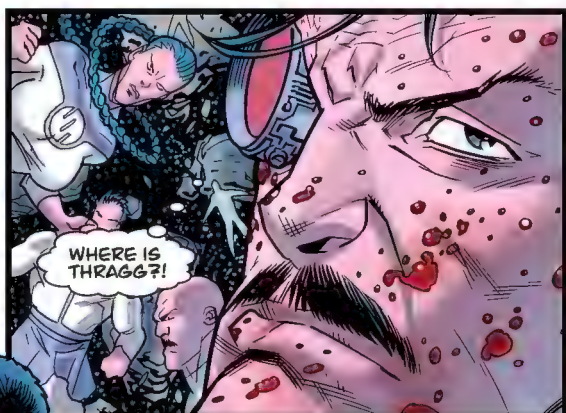
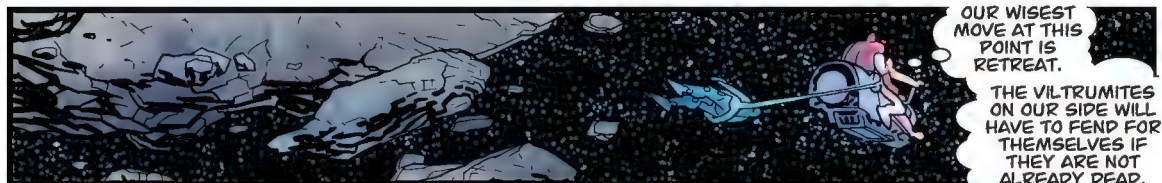
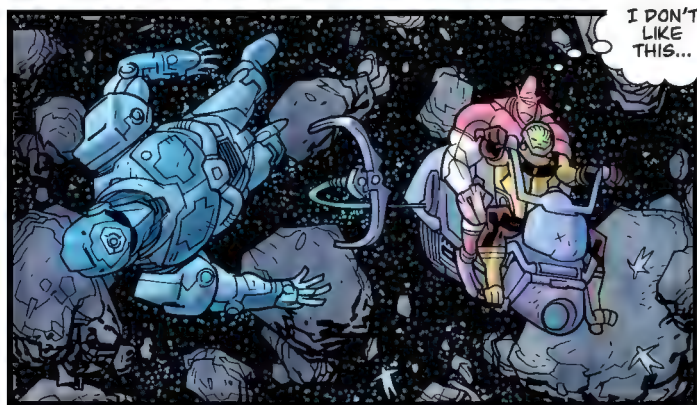


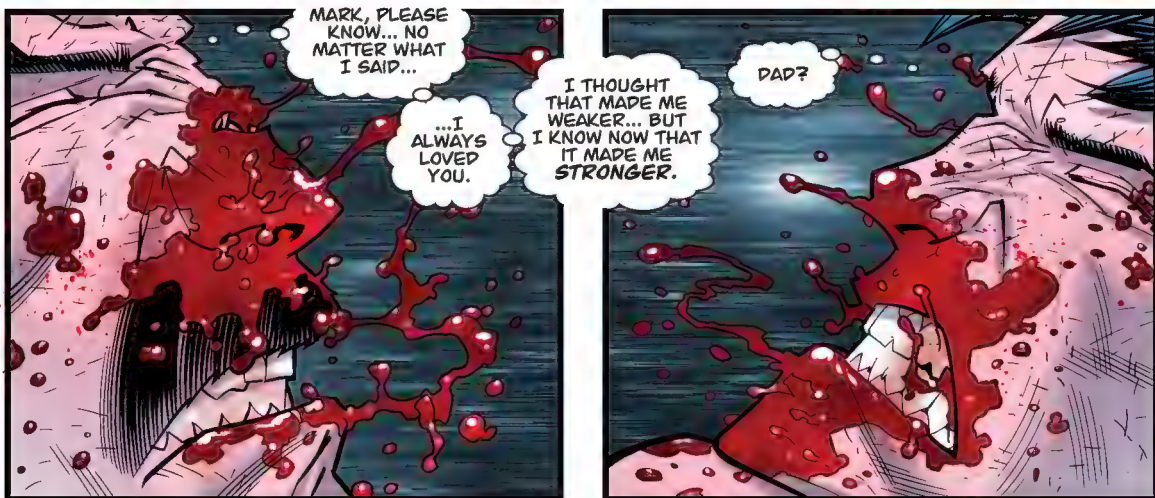
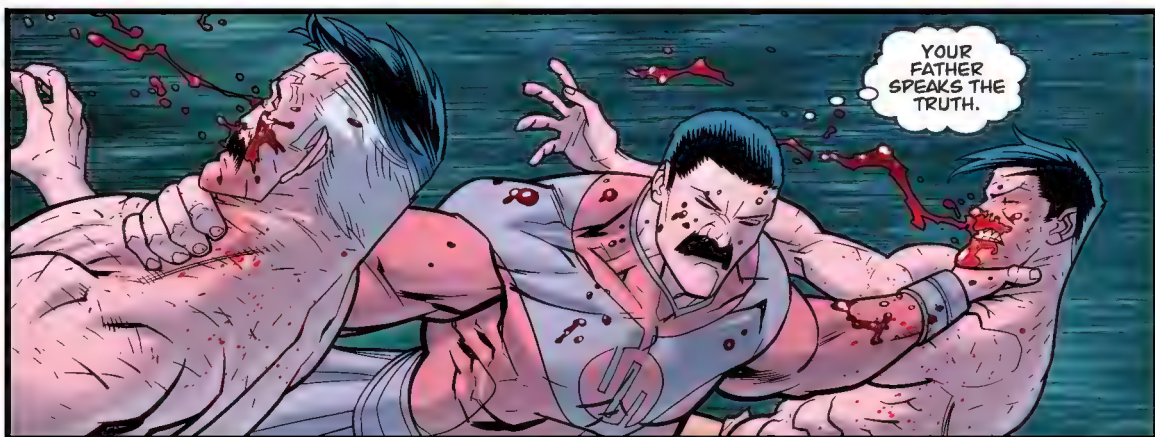
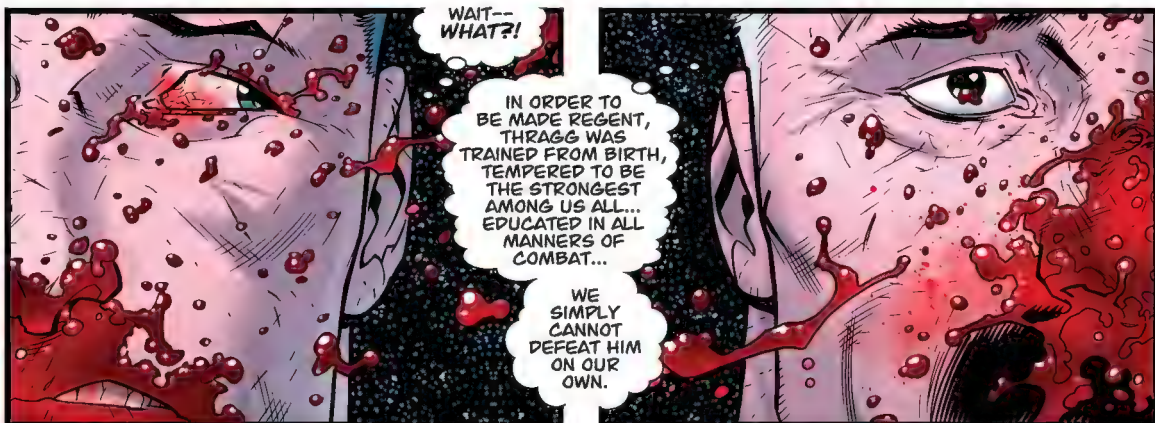


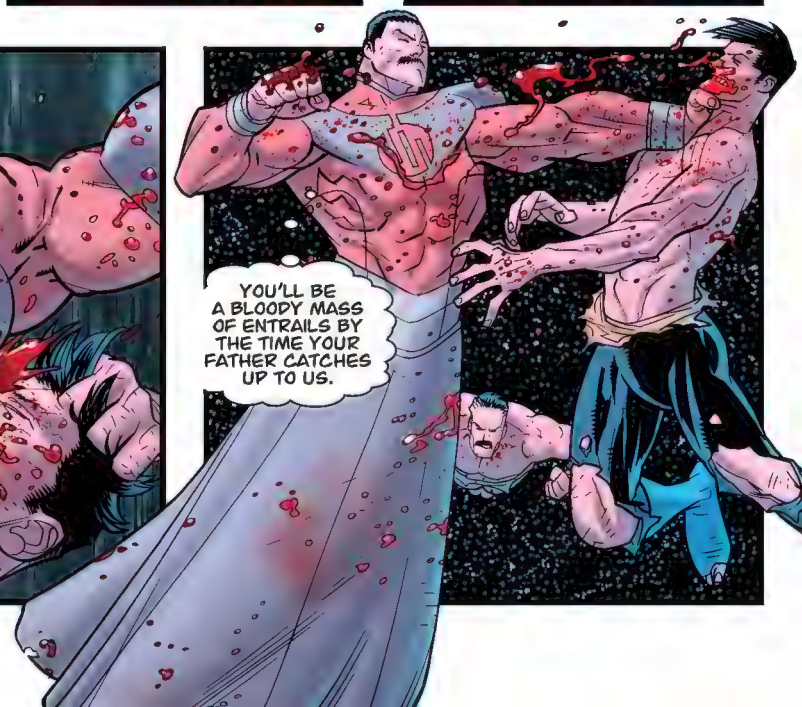
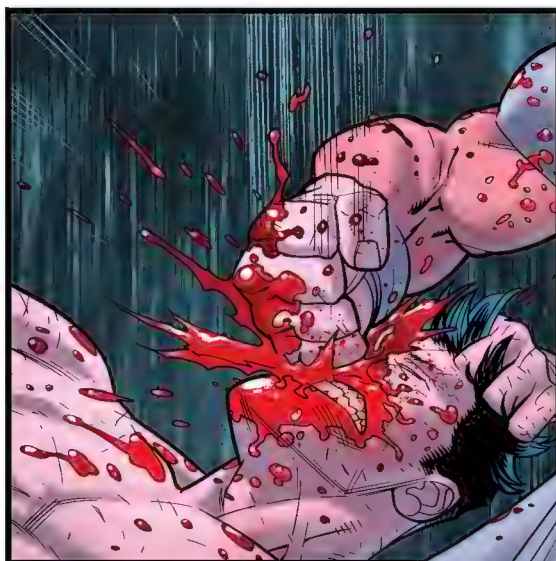
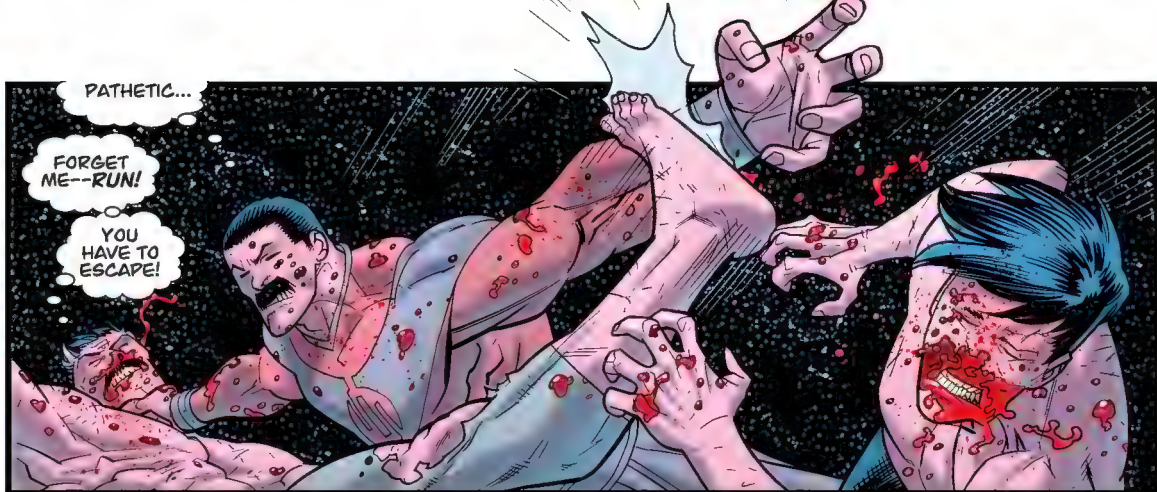


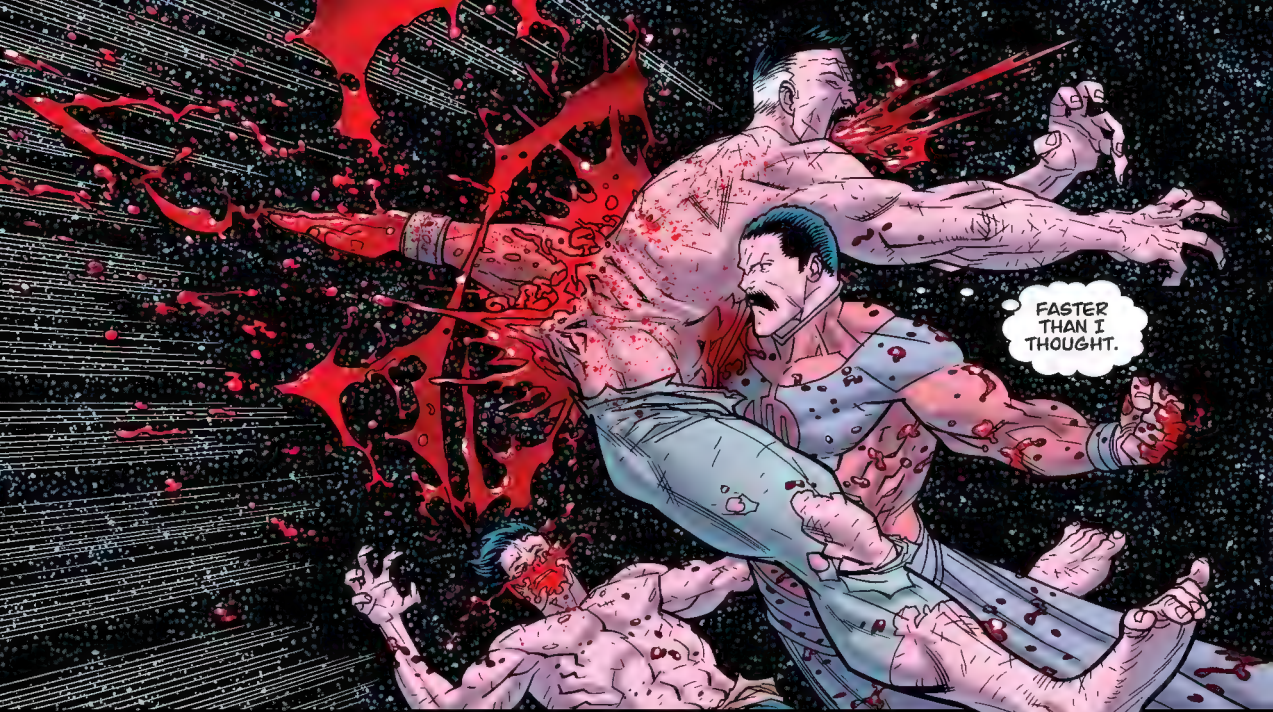










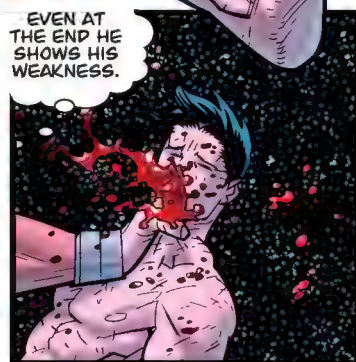


FASTER
THAN I
THOUGHT.

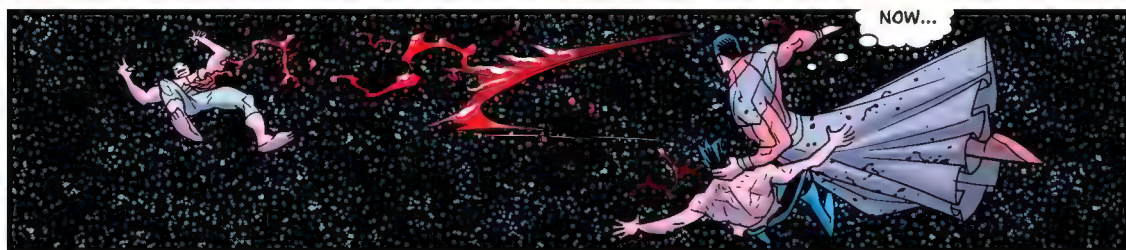


MARK...

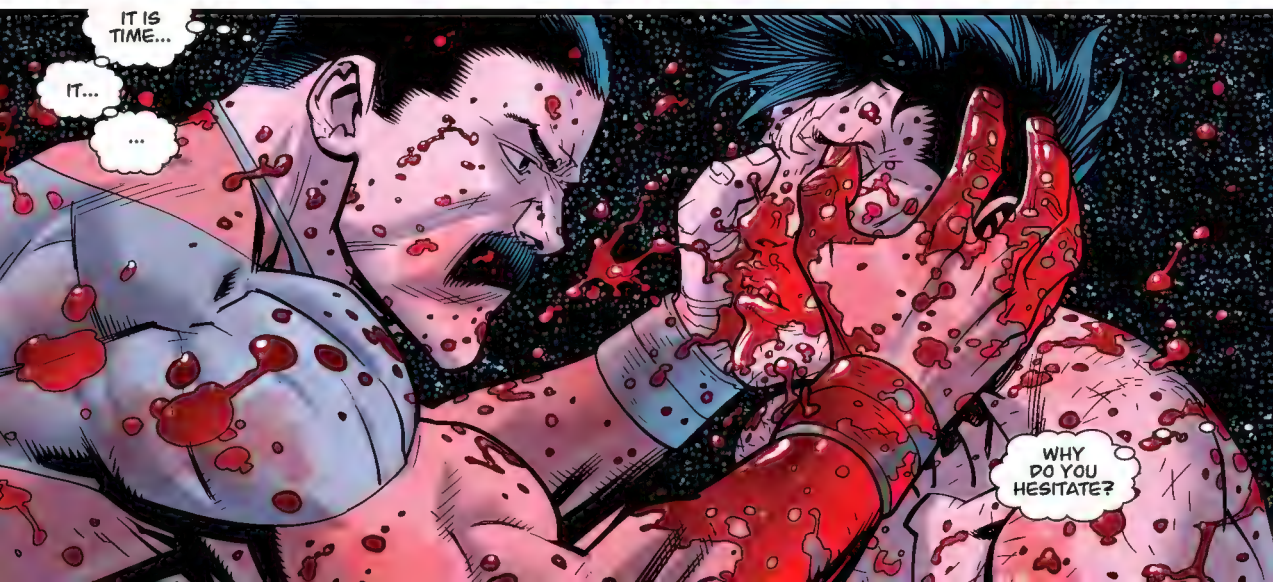
...



EVEN AT
THE END
HE
SHOWS HIS
WEAKNESS.



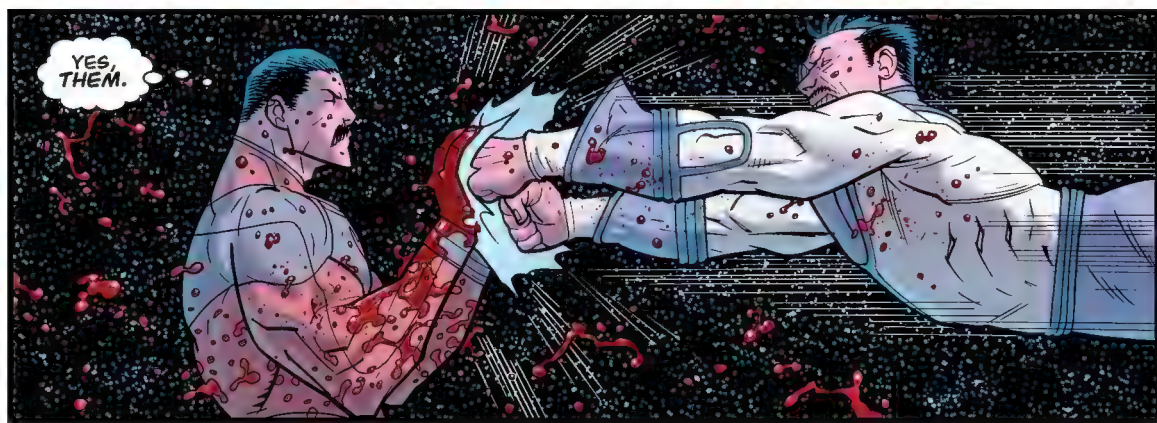
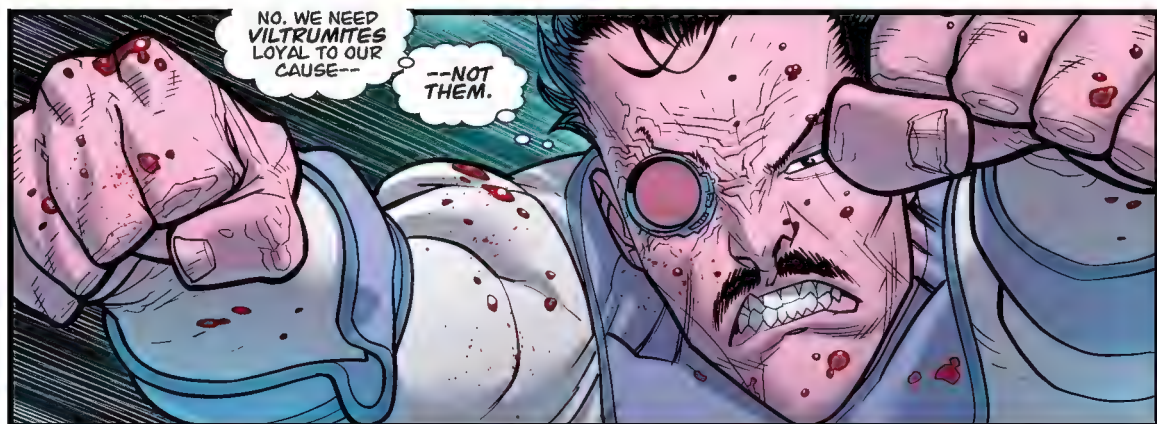
NOW...



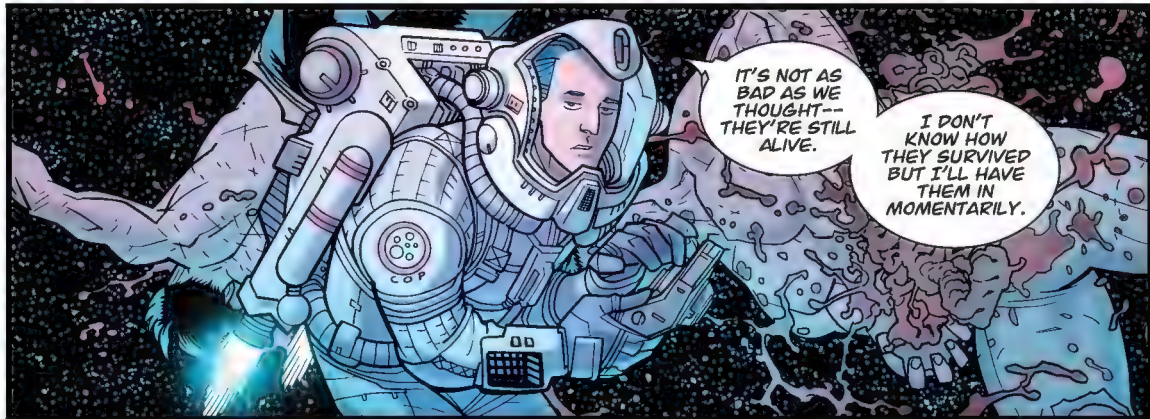
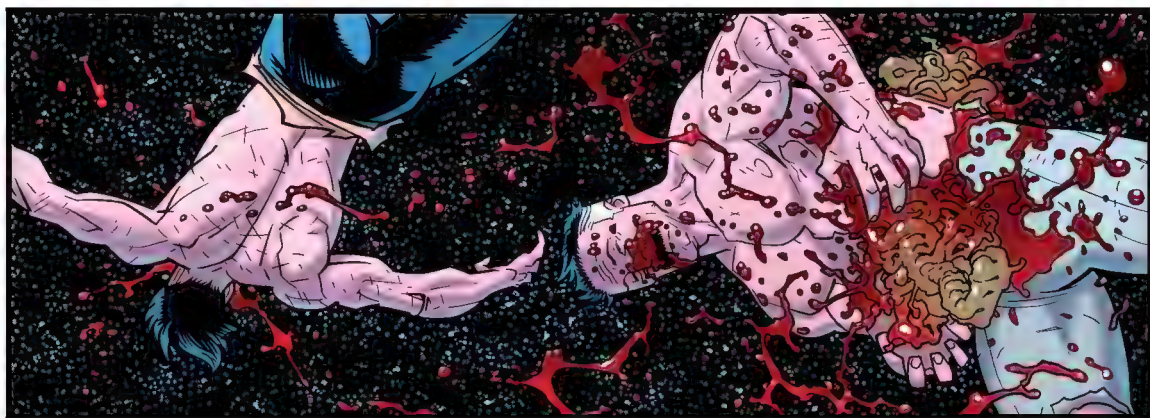
IT IS
TIME...

IT...

WHY
DO YOU
HESITATE?









WHA--

--HUH?

THEY TOLD
ME YOU WERE
WAKING UP.
I'M GLAD I
MADE IT HERE
IN TIME.

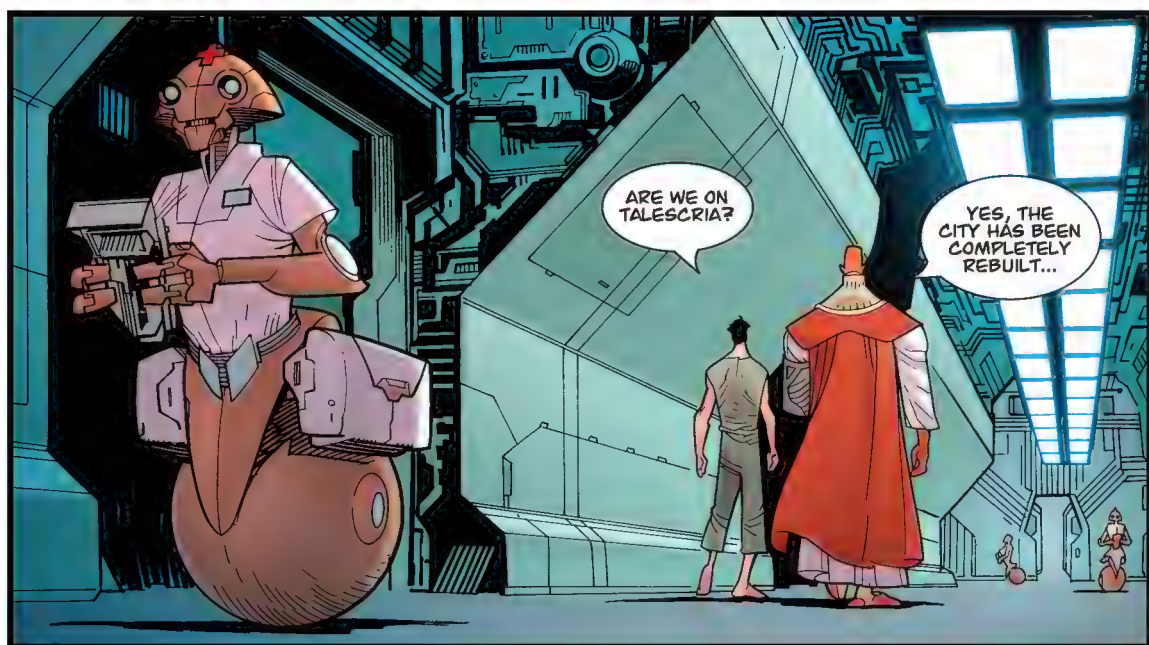
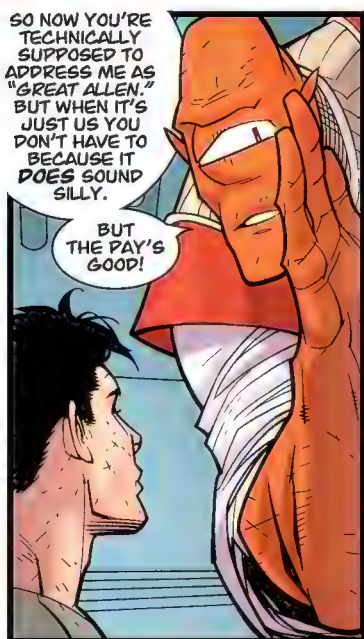
IT'S SO
GOOD TO SEE
YOU, MARK. I
WAS WORRIED
THERE AT THE
BEGINNING.

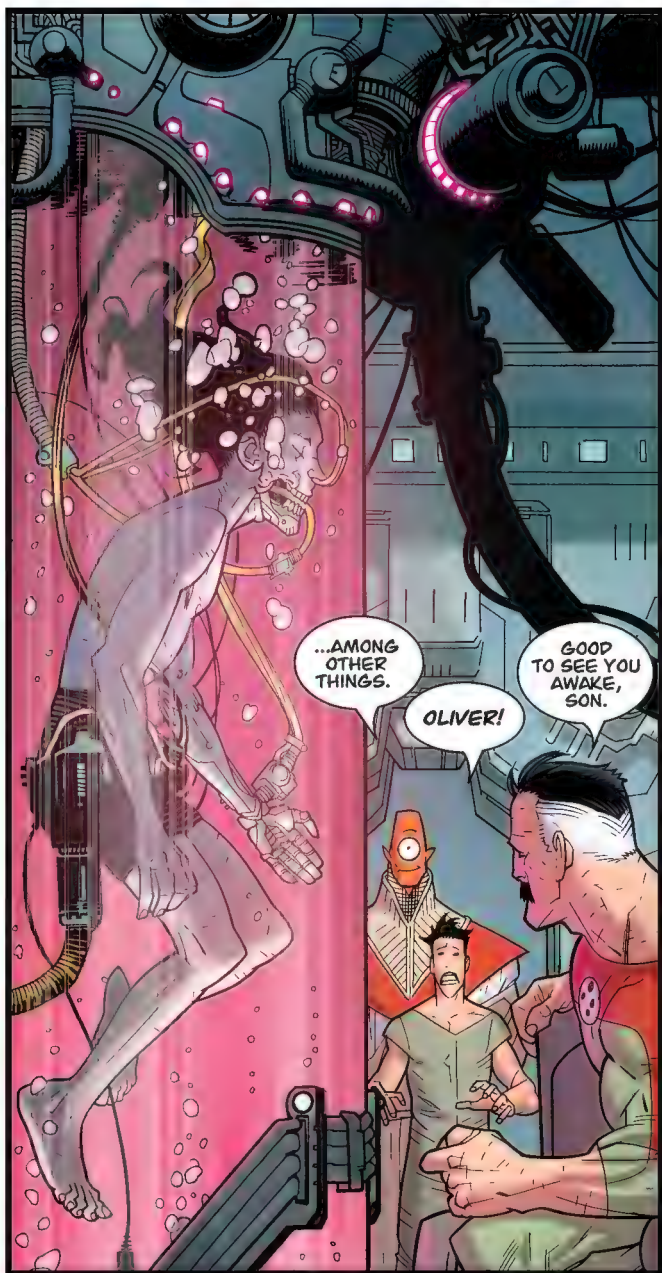


WHAT ARE YOU
WEARING?

THIS? MY
ARM WAS
BROKEN IN THE
BATTLE OF
VILTRUM. I'M
STILL WEARING
A CAST.

THAT'S NOT
WHAT I MEANT...
AND HOW LONG
HAVE I BEEN
OUT?

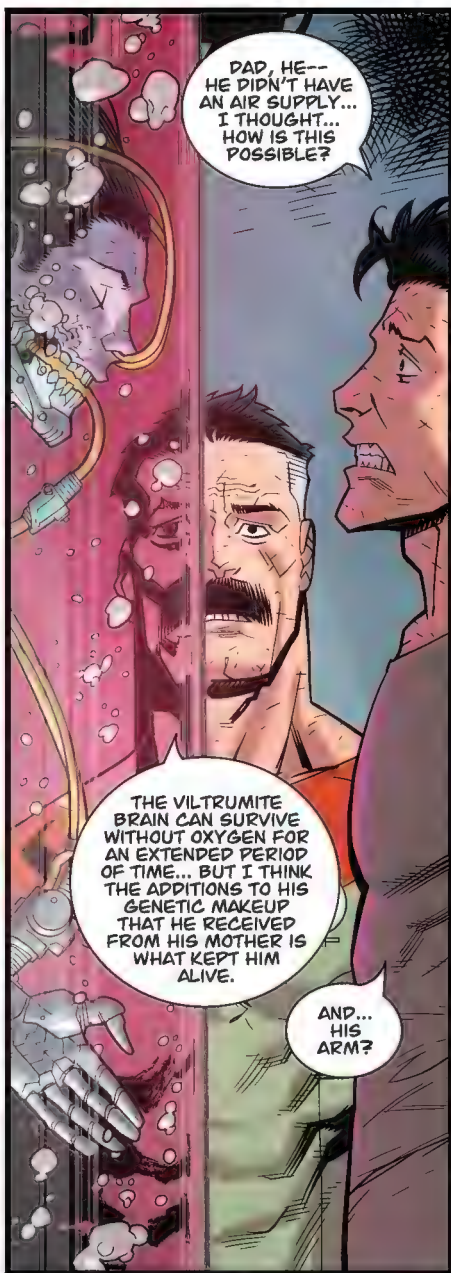




...AMONG OTHER THINGS.

OLIVER!

GOOD TO SEE YOU AWAKE, SON.



DAD, HE-- HE DIDN'T HAVE AN AIR SUPPLY... I THOUGHT... HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

THE VILTRUMITE BRAIN CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT OXYGEN FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME... BUT I THINK THE ADDITIONS TO HIS GENETIC MAKEUP THAT HE RECEIVED FROM HIS MOTHER IS WHAT KEPT HIM ALIVE.

AND... HIS ARM?



THE SOLUTION HE'S SUSPENDED IN IS ENHANCING HIS NATURAL REGENERATIVE ABILITIES.

HIS OWN SKIN IS BEING GROWN OVER PROSTHETIC REPLACEMENTS FOR HIS ARM AND LOWER JAW.

HIS BRAIN SCANS ARE REMARKABLE. IF HIS HEALING KEEPS UP AT THIS PACE, HE SHOULD BE OUT OF THE TUBE IN ANOTHER WEEK, READY TO BEGIN HIS PHYSICAL REHABILITATION.

HE WON'T BE BACK UP TO FULL POWER ANY TIME SOON... BUT HE'S ALIVE.

HE'S ALIVE.





GRANTED, SPACE IS A BIG PLACE, AND THEY CAN CERTAINLY TRAVEL GREAT DISTANCES IN LITTLE TIME... BUT WE'VE GOT EYES IN ALL QUADRANTS OF THE GALAXY.

IT WOULD BE VERY HARD TO HIDE FROM US.

WE'VE SEARCHED ALL THE FORMER PLANETS OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE TO SEE IF SOMEONE MIGHT POSSIBLY BE HARBORING THEM. **THEY'RE NOT.**

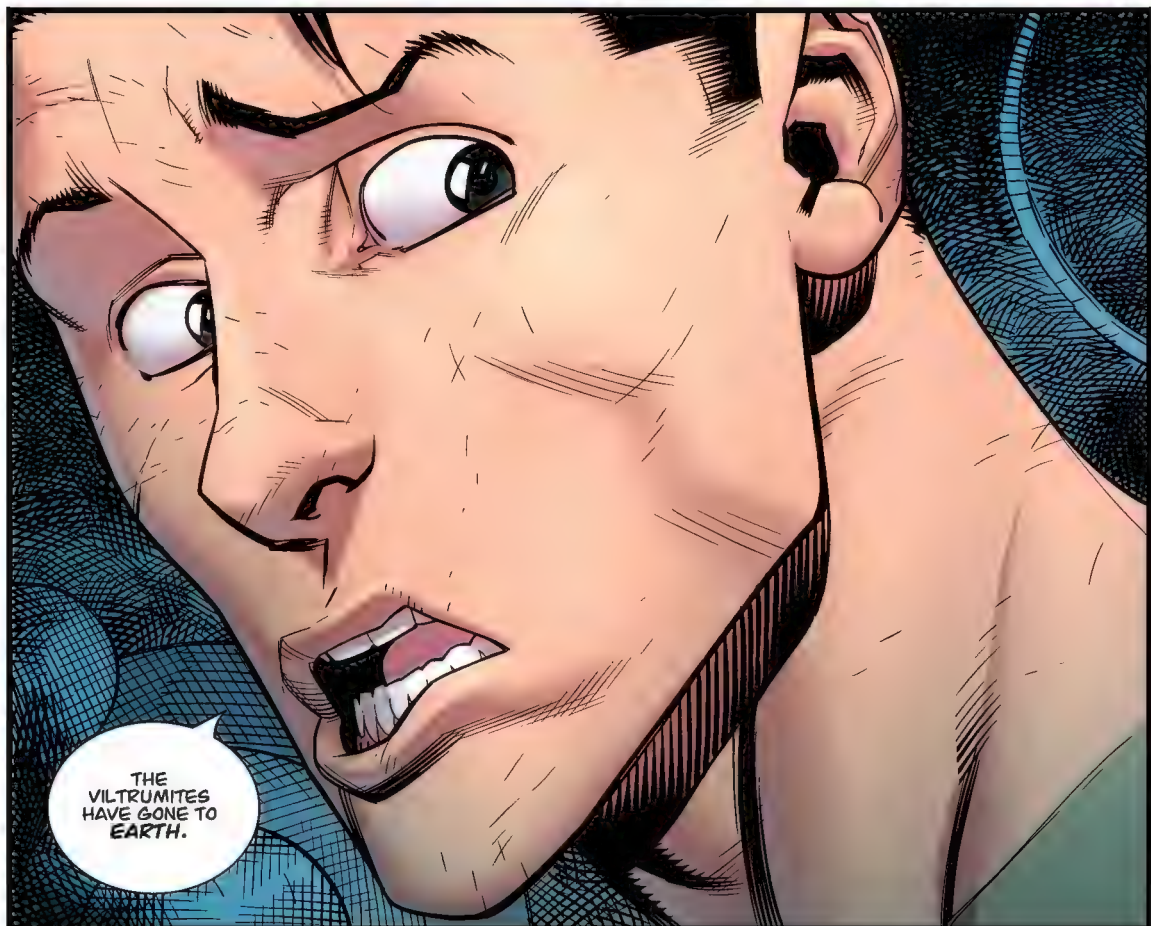
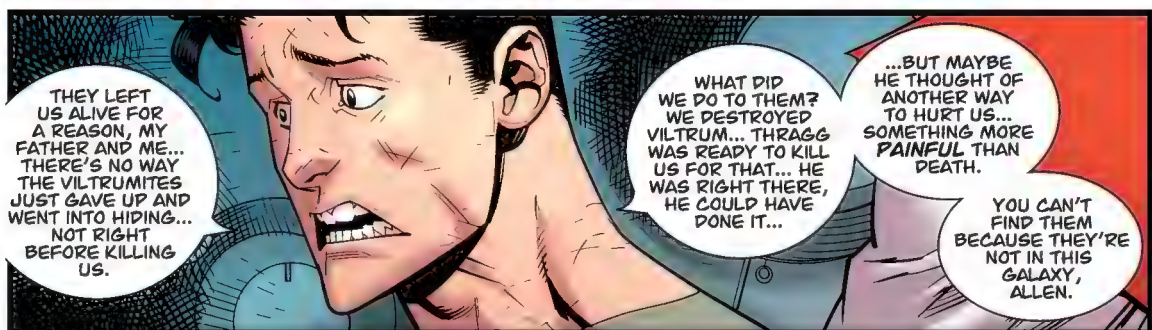
WITHOUT THOSE PLANETS TO BACK THEM, THEIR NUMBERS DWINDLE TO THE POINT THAT ANY FRONTAL ASSAULT AGAINST US WOULD BE INEFFECTIVE AT BEST, **DISASTROUS** AT WORST.

SO IT MAKES SENSE THAT THEY WOULD LAY LOW FOR A WHILE, REGROUP, PREPARE FOR A SERIES OF SMALL, CALCULATED ASSAULTS.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WOULD HAVE THEM ATTACKING THEIR FORMERLY OCCUPIED PLANETS. IT WOULD TAKE LITTLE EFFORT TO TURN THEM BACK TO THEIR SIDE... AND EVENTUALLY THEY WOULD AGAIN COMMAND A FORCE LARGE ENOUGH TO DESTROY US.

WE'VE BEEN STATIONING OUR TROOPS WITH THESE PLANETS IN PREPARATION FOR THIS. A DELAY OF THIS LONG, ESPECIALLY WITH THEM KNOWING YOU AND YOUR FATHER AND BROTHER WERE OUT OF COMMISSION FOLLOWING OUR LAST BATTLE... MAKES NO SENSE...

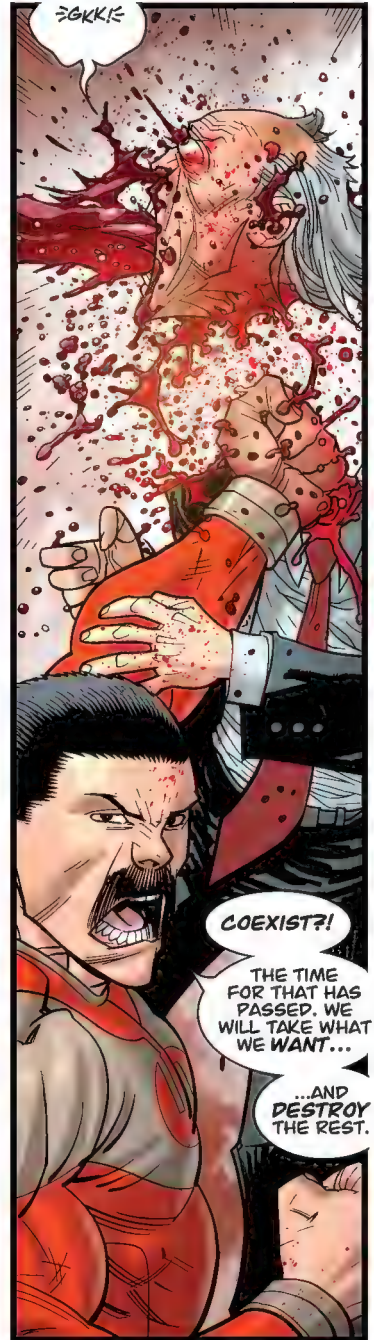
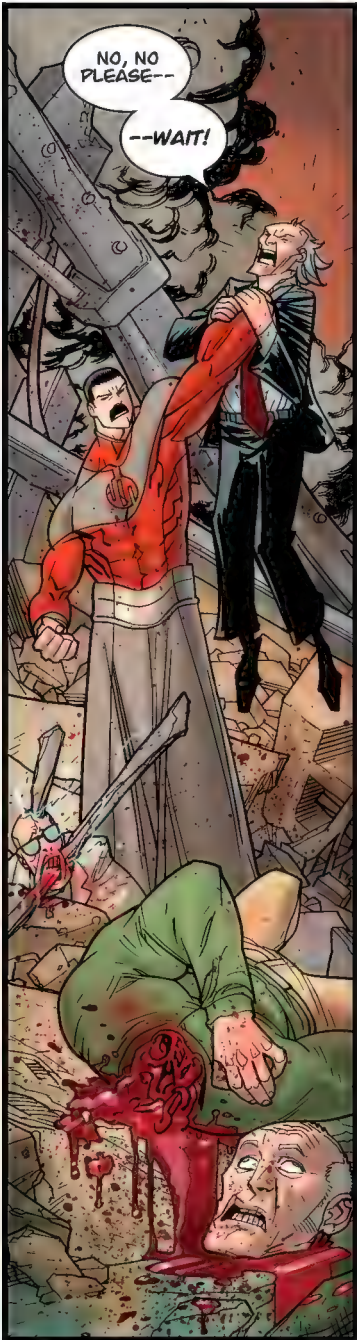
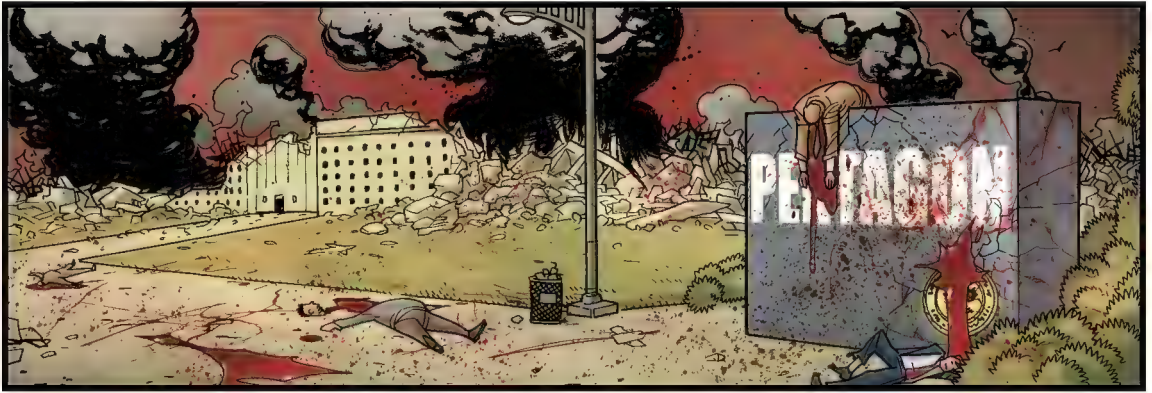
...NO SENSE AT ALL.



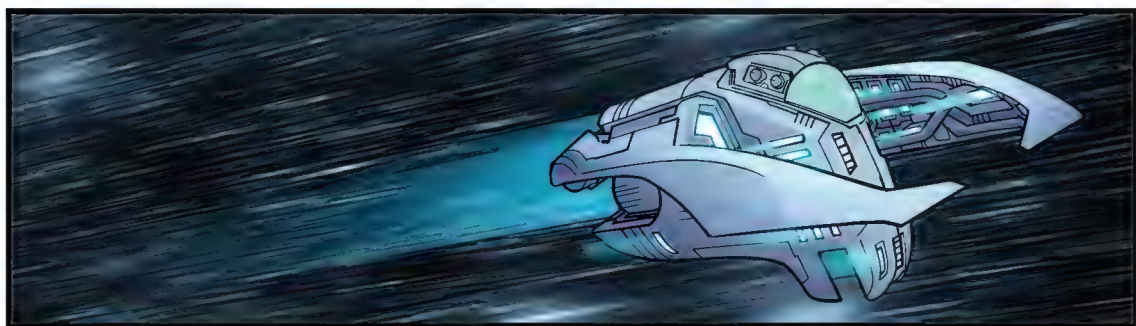
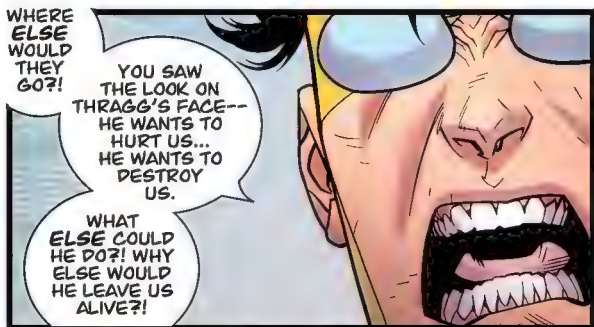


CHAPTER SEVEN









TALESCRIA, HEADQUARTERS OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.

THE MOVERS WON'T BE HERE FOR AT LEAST TWENTY MINUTES. PLENTY OF TIME IF YOU WANT TO--

TELIA, PLEASE... NOT NOW.

YOUR FRIENDS WILL BE FINE. THOSE VILTRUMITES PROBABLY JUST WENT INTO HIDING.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM. I BET WE DON'T HEAR FROM THEM FOR YEARS.

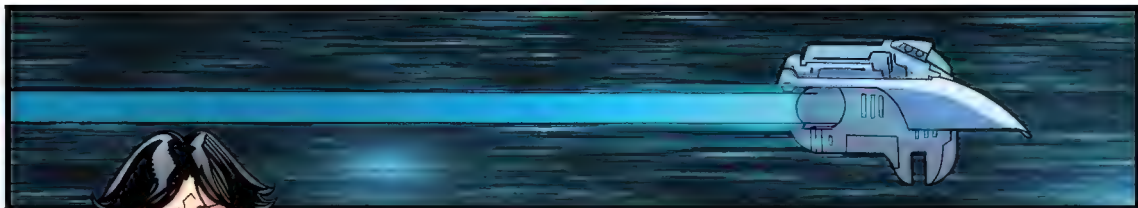
I DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF TIME TO WORRY ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES. I COMMAND ALL THE PLANETS IN THE COALITION, NOW... I'VE GOT FAR TOO MUCH TO WORRY ABOUT.

STILL, I CAN'T STAND THAT WE JUST DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY WENT... PART OF ME, I HATE TO ADMIT, WISHES THEY DID GO TO EARTH... AT LEAST THEN, WE'D KNOW.

BUT... THAT'S NOT ALL OF IT...

OH, ALLEN, BABY... WHAT IS IT?

I MISS MY FRIEND... TECH JACKET.



I KNOW I'M NOWHERE NEAR AS STRONG AS YOU GUYS--BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW, WHATEVER WE'RE HEADING INTO, WHATEVER WE'RE UP AGAINST...

I'M TOTALLY THERE FOR YOU.

EARTH IS MY HOME, TOO-- AND I'M GOING TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO TAKE OUT AS MANY VILTRUMITES AS I CAN.

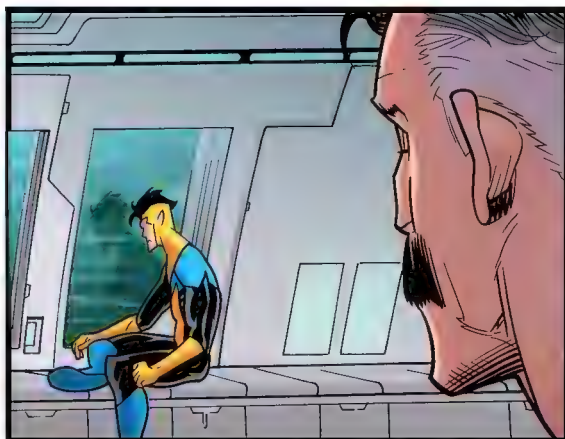
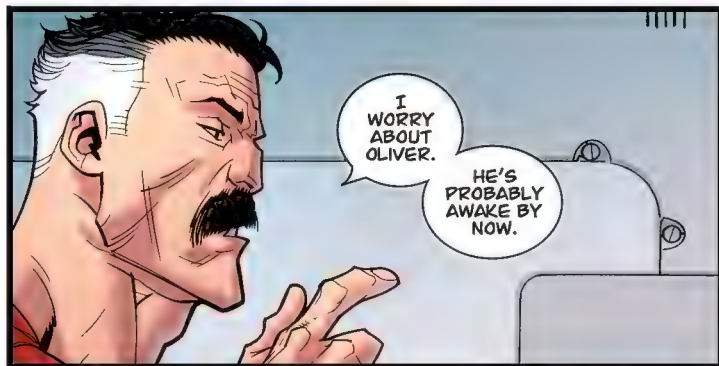
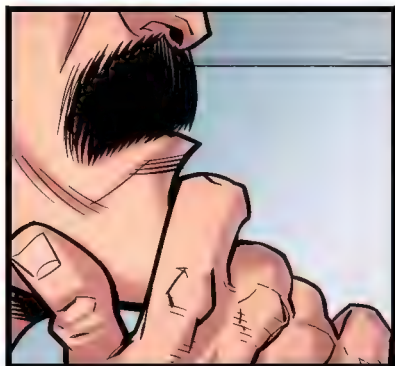
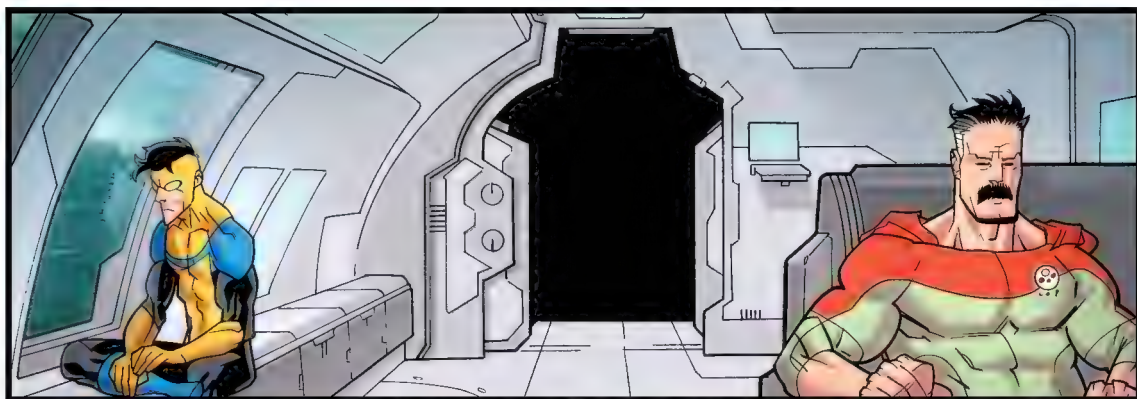
ALLEN LET ME KEEP A LOT OF THE WEAPONS THEY ARMED ME WITH THAT WERE MADE FROM THE THINGS YOU'D WRITTEN ABOUT IN YOUR BOOKS, NOLAN--AND I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HOW I'LL BEST USE THEM TO STAY IN THE FIGHT AND KEEP THEM FROM GETTING NEAR ME.

I CAN ASSURE YOU, I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO--

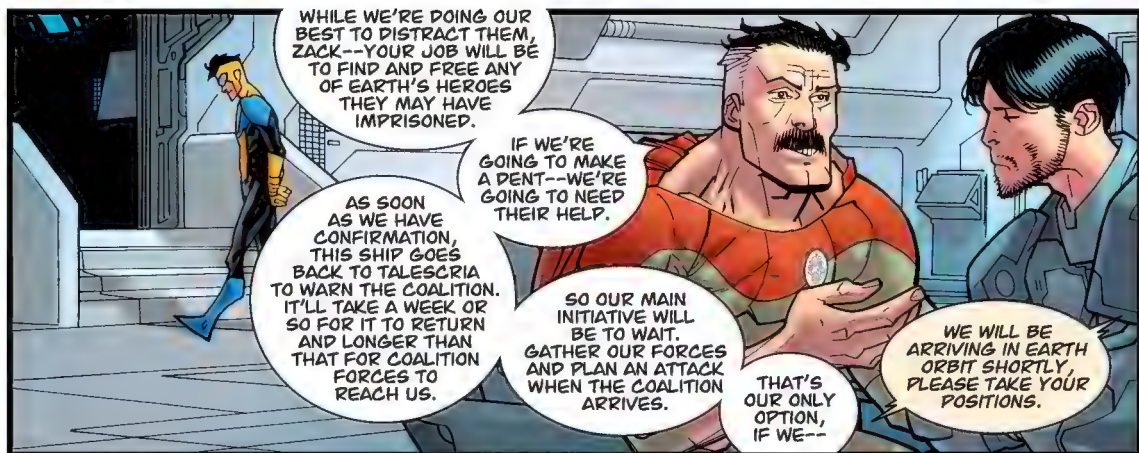
--HELP SAVE EARTH FROM THOSE DUDES...

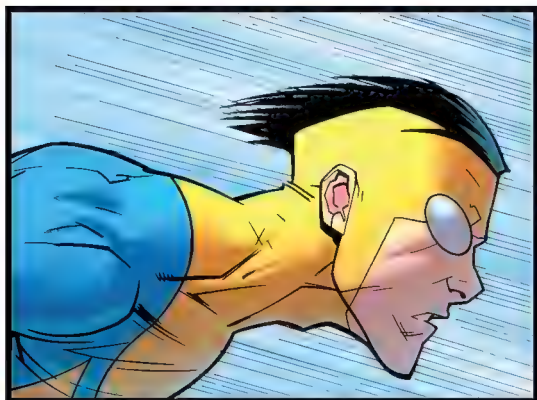
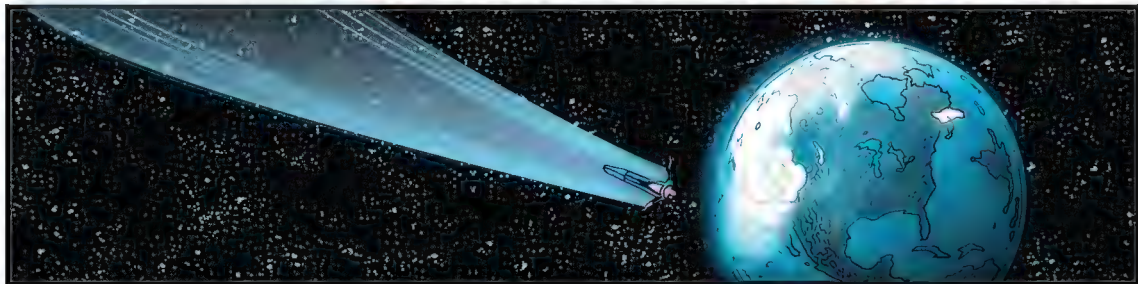
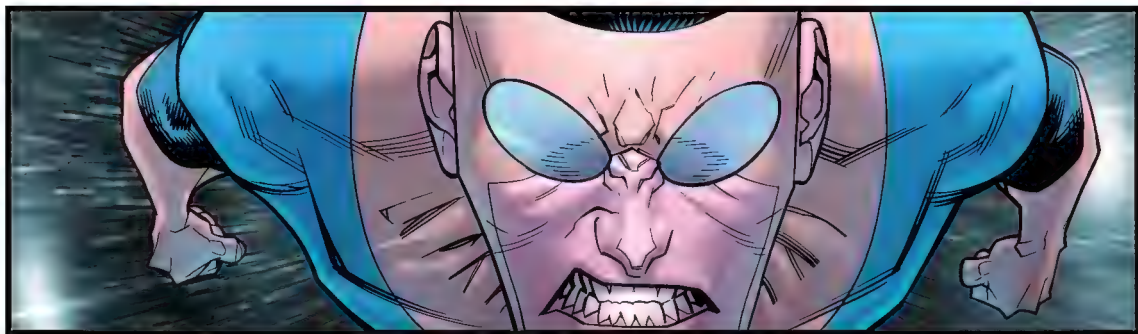
...AND THEN I'M GOING TO MAKE SWEET LOVE TO YOUR FACES IN CELEBRATION.

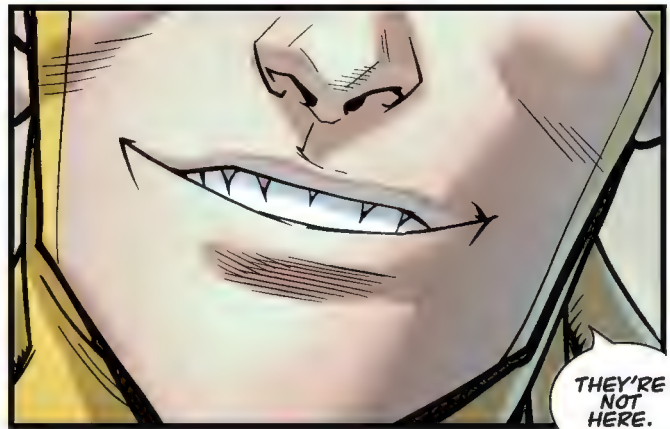
YOU GUYS SUCK.





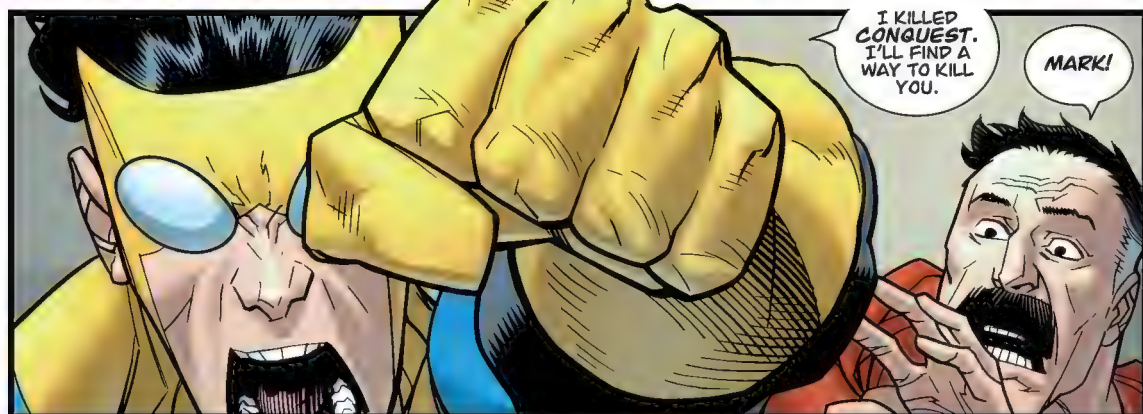






WE VERY
MUCH ARE
HERE.







YOU CAN FIGHT ME IF YOU WISH, BUT I AM NOT ALONE HERE.

IF BY CHANCE YOU WERE ABLE TO INJURE ME, I COULDN'T GUARANTEE THE REST OF MY FORCES WOULDN'T LAY WASTE TO THIS PLANET.

I SUGGEST THAT WE TALK, THE THREE OF US.

YOUR CHOICE. FIGHT OR TALK.



TALK.

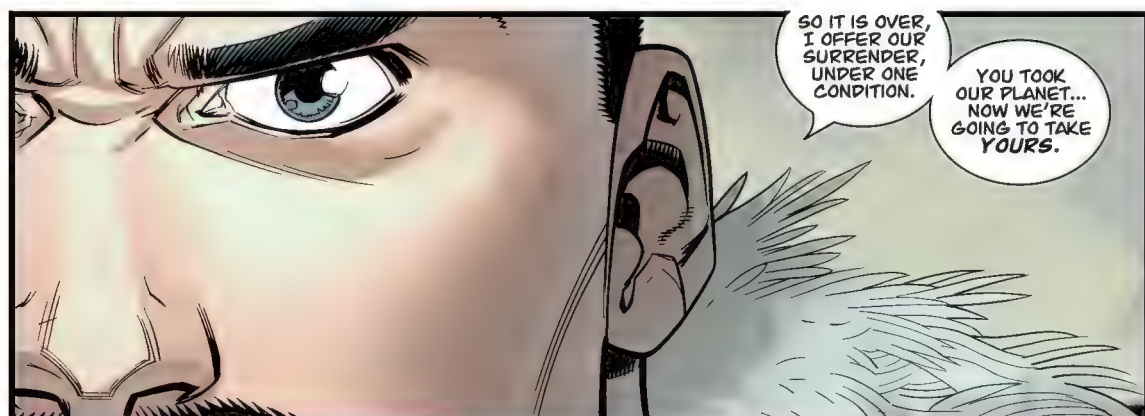


WISE CHOICE... I AM PLEASSED.

I HAVE COME TO OFFER YOU A TRUCE. THERE ARE EXACTLY THIRTY-SEVEN OF US LEFT ALIVE, SOME OF US SEVERELY INJURED.

THAT IS ENOUGH TO TEAR THIS PLANET IN HALF, KILLING EVERY LIVING CREATURE HERE, AND THERE IS NOTHING YOU COULD DO TO STOP THAT.

AND IT WOULD BE FAIR RETALIATION FOR WHAT YOU DID TO OUR HOME WORLD.

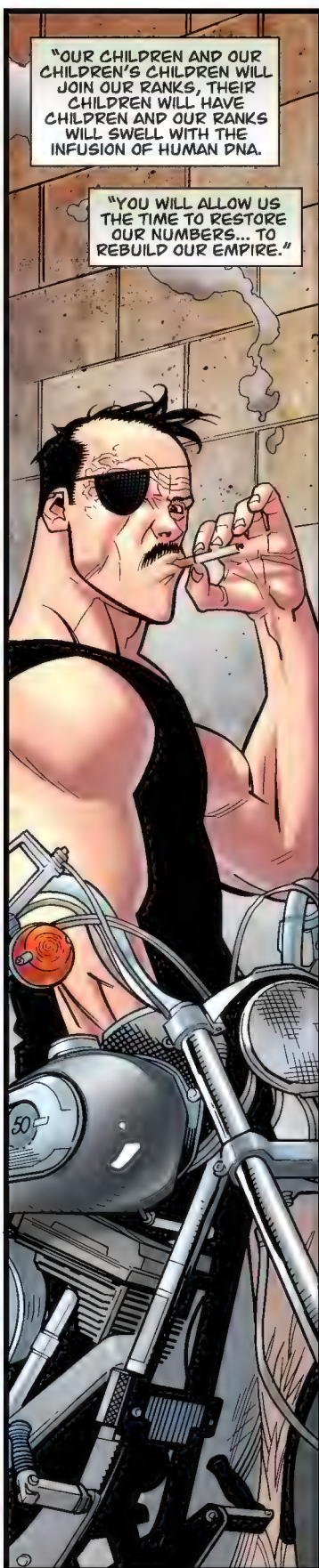






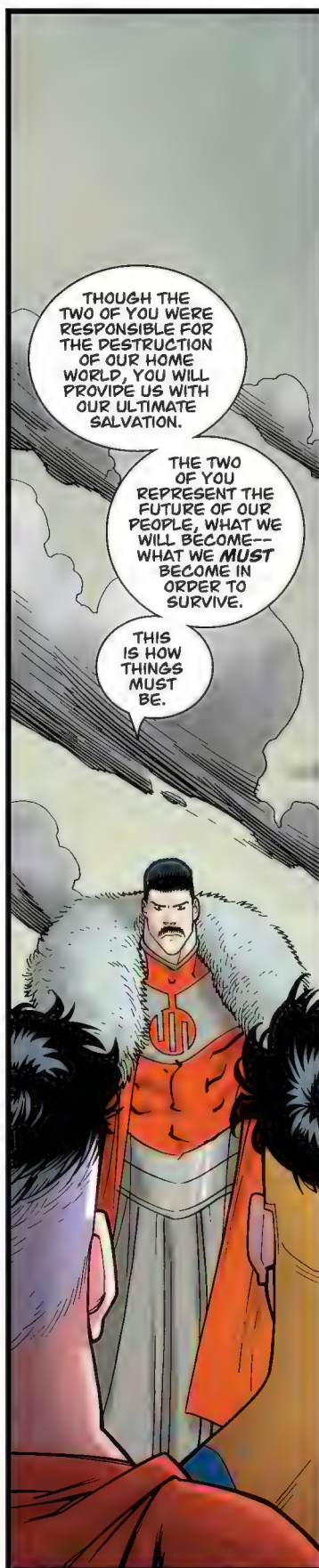
THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF THE VILTRUMITE PEOPLE.

WE WILL RESTORE OUR RANKS OVER THE COURSE OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS. HUMAN DNA HAS BEEN PROVEN TO MAKE NEAR PERFECT HYBRIDS... THE CLOSEST THING WE HAVE TO PURE-BLOODED VILTRUMITES.



"OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN WILL JOIN OUR RANKS, THEIR CHILDREN WILL HAVE CHILDREN AND OUR RANKS WILL SWELL WITH THE INFUSION OF HUMAN DNA.

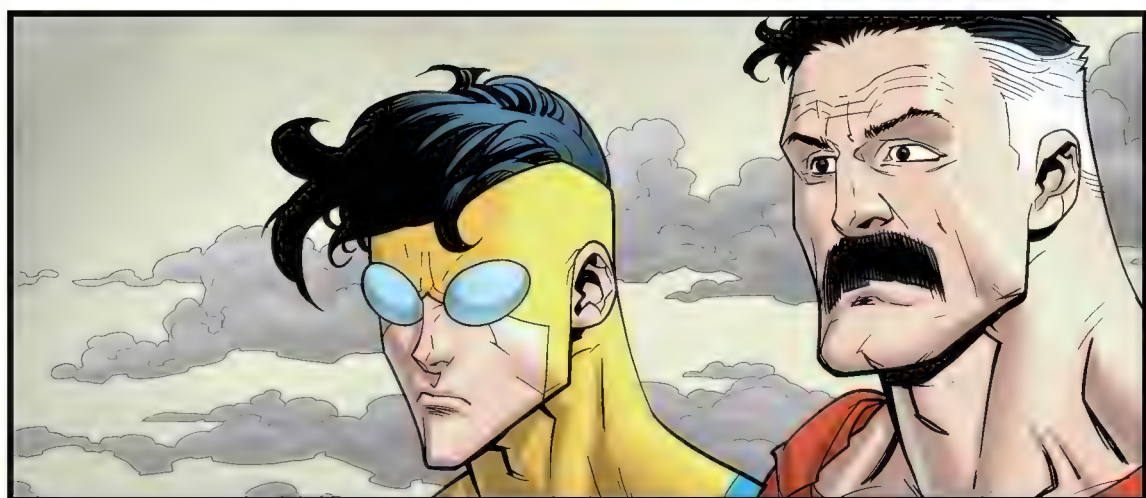
"YOU WILL ALLOW US THE TIME TO RESTORE OUR NUMBERS... TO REBUILD OUR EMPIRE."



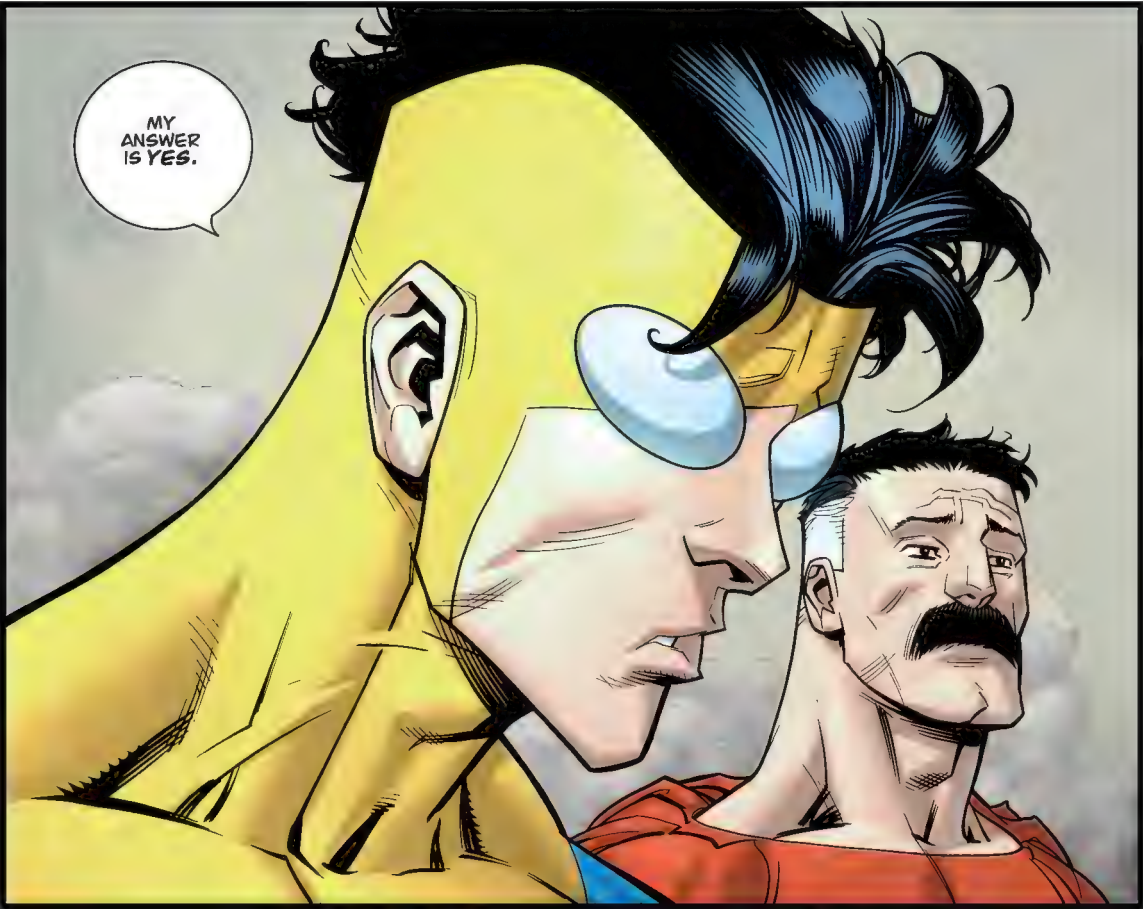
THOUGH THE TWO OF YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR HOME WORLD, YOU WILL PROVIDE US WITH OUR ULTIMATE SALVATION.

THE TWO OF YOU REPRESENT THE FUTURE OF OUR PEOPLE, WHAT WE WILL BECOME-- WHAT WE **MUST** BECOME IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.

THIS IS HOW THINGS MUST BE.

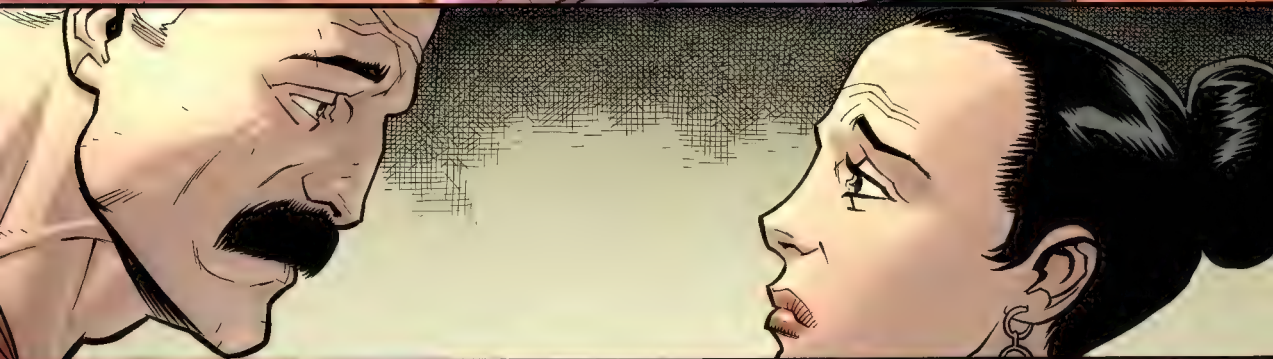








CHAPTER EIGHT

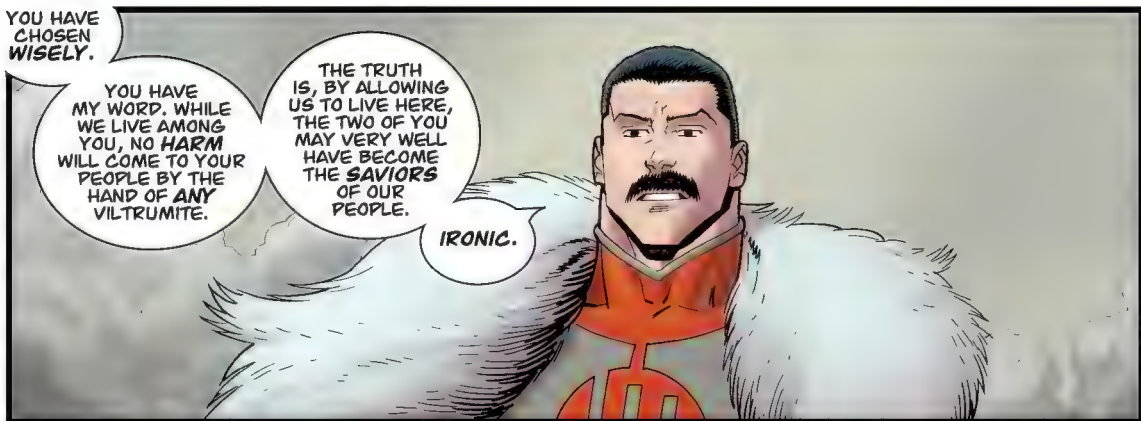


YOU HAVE
CHOSEN
WISELY.

YOU HAVE
MY WORD. WHILE
WE LIVE AMONG
YOU, NO HARM
WILL COME TO YOUR
PEOPLE BY THE
HAND OF ANY
VILTRUMITE.

THE TRUTH
IS, BY ALLOWING
US TO LIVE HERE,
THE TWO OF YOU
MAY VERY WELL
HAVE BECOME
THE SAVIORS
OF OUR
PEOPLE.

IRONIC.



MY
GOD...

WHAT
HAVE I
DONE?

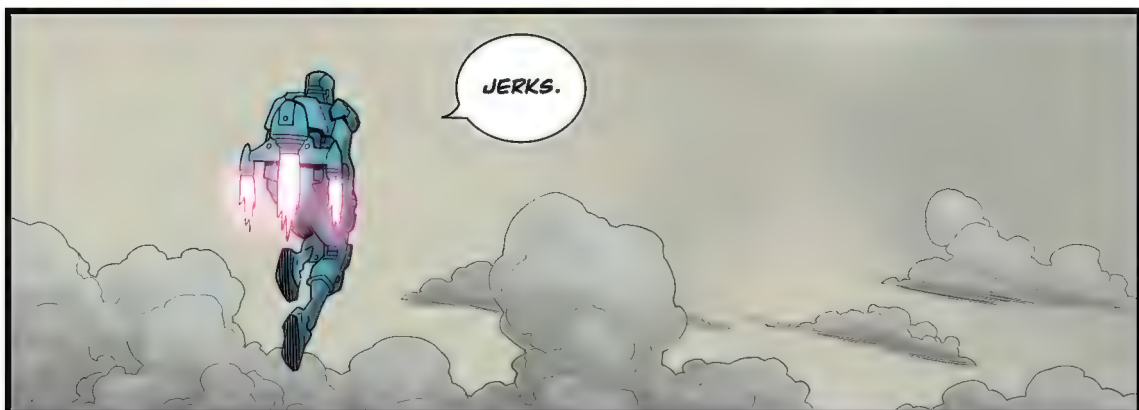
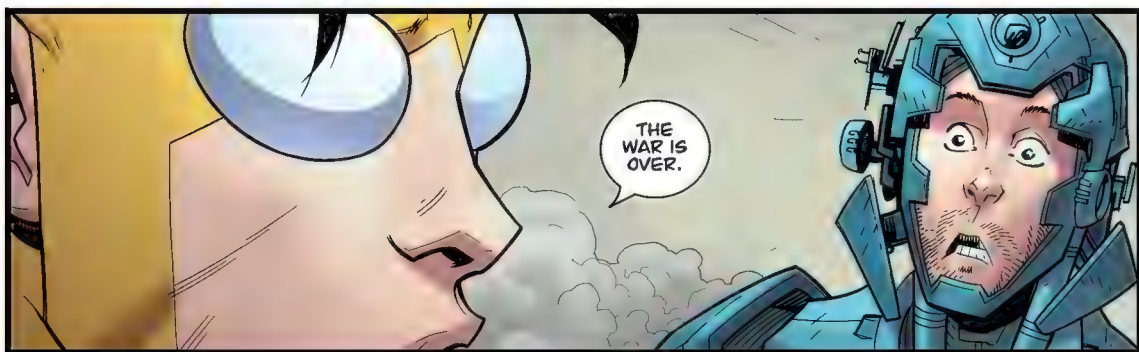
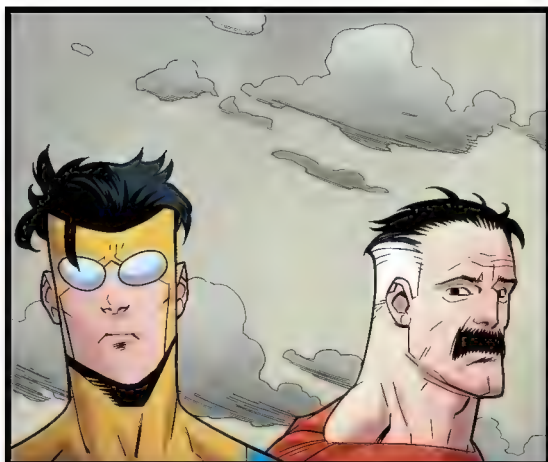


YOU HAVE
SAVED THE
LIVES OF
EVERY LIVING
THING ON THIS
PLANET.

YOU WILL
NOT HEAR
FROM ME
AGAIN.

I LEAVE
YOU.

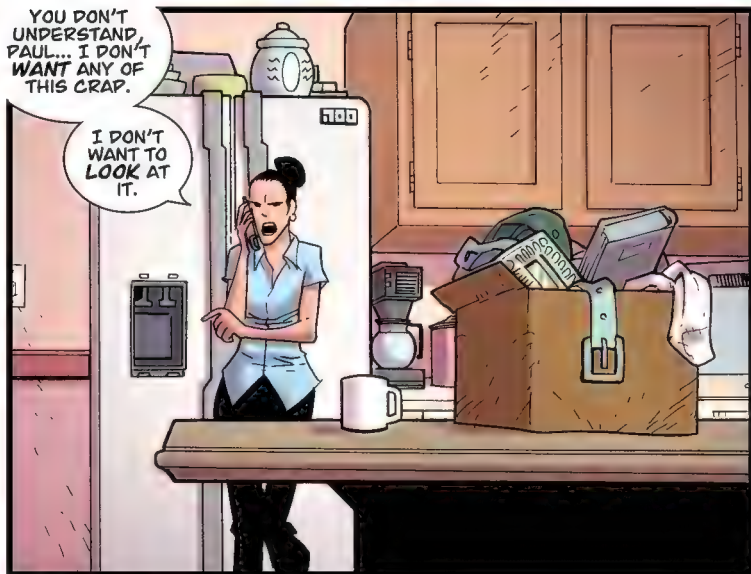






YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, PAUL... I DON'T WANT ANY OF THIS CRAP.

I DON'T WANT TO LOOK AT IT.



THERE ARE TOO MANY MEMORIES ATTACHED. YEAH, GOOD AND BAD ONES.

IT DOES UPSET ME. I CAN ADMIT THAT I MISS YOU A LITTLE BIT. THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THINGS.

THAT'S NOT MY FAULT AND YOU KNOW IT.

NO.

JUST--

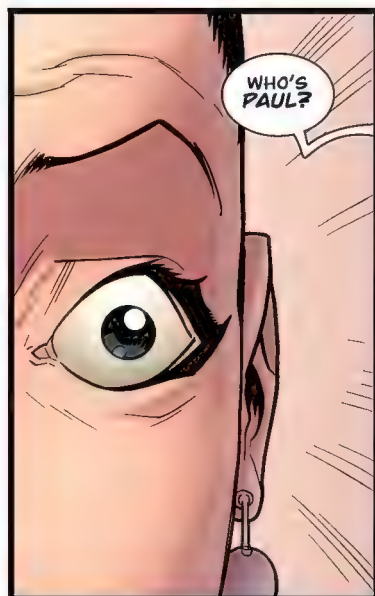
JUST COME OVER TODAY AND GET THIS CRAP OR I'M THROWING IT AWAY.



DEEP.

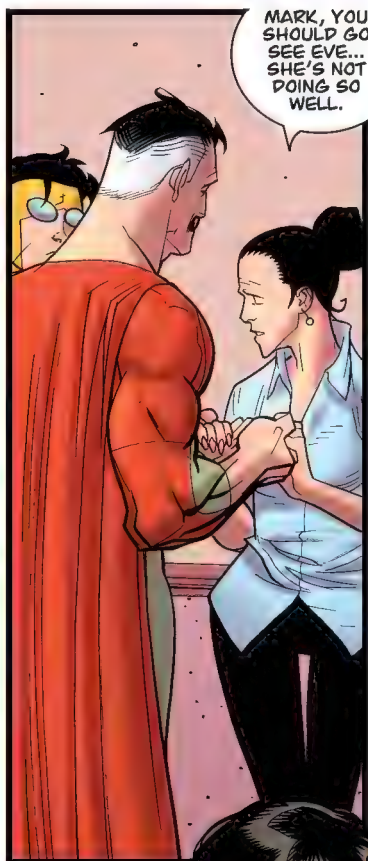
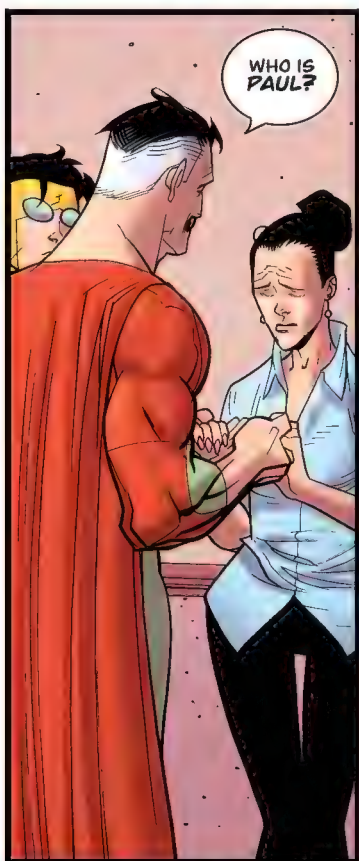


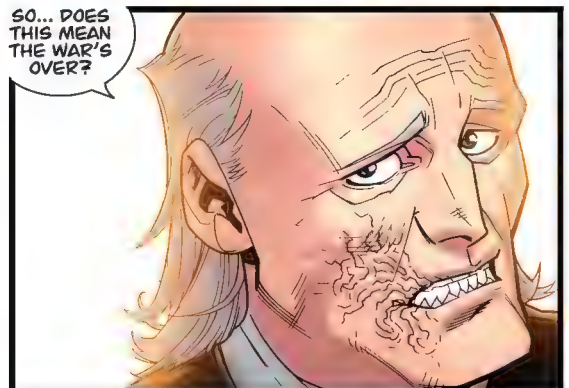
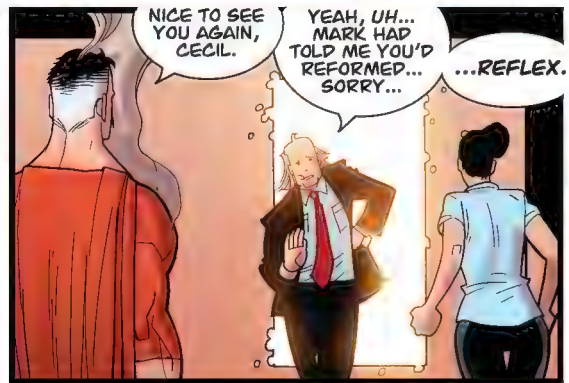
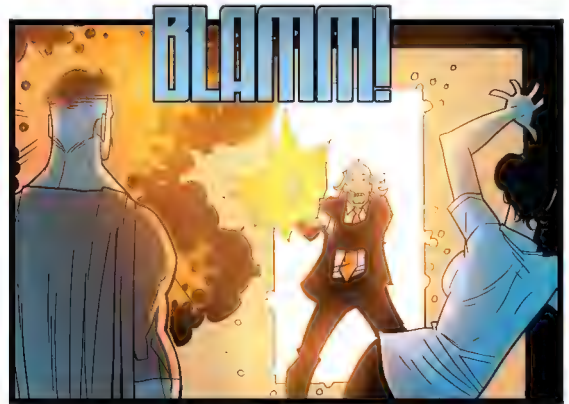
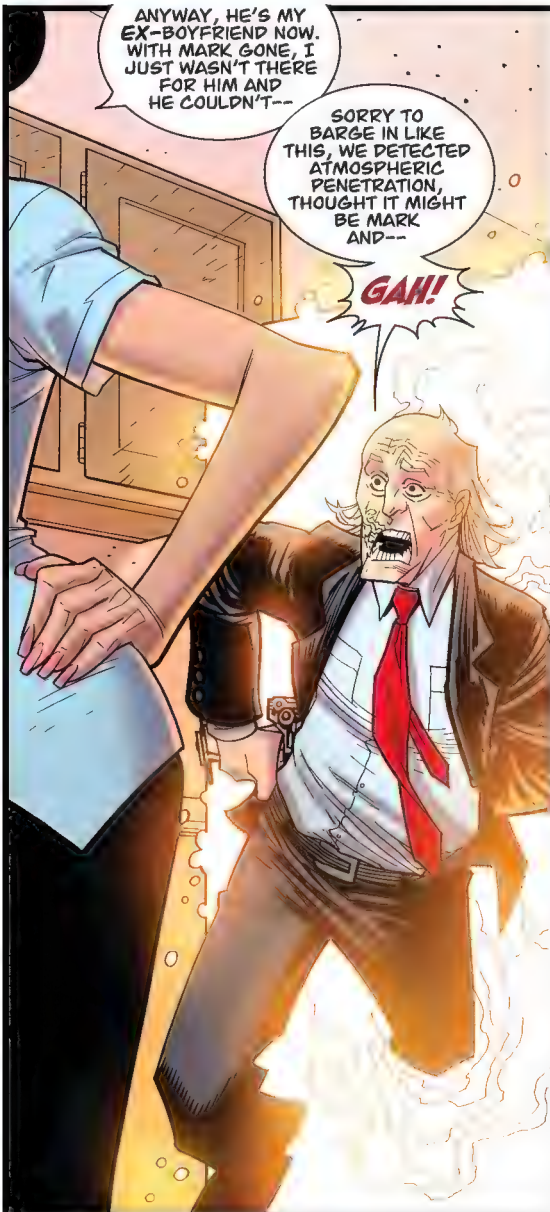
SCREW YOU, PAUL.

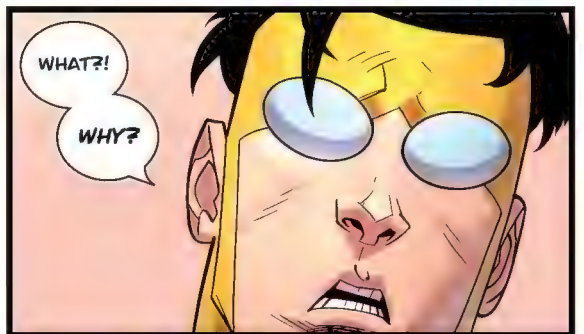
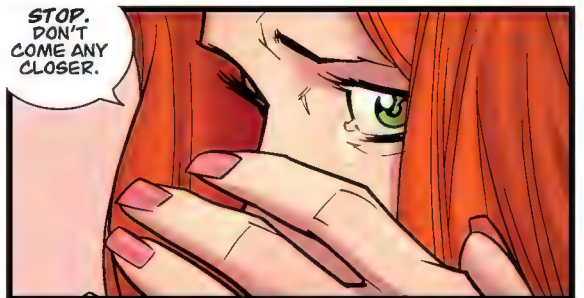
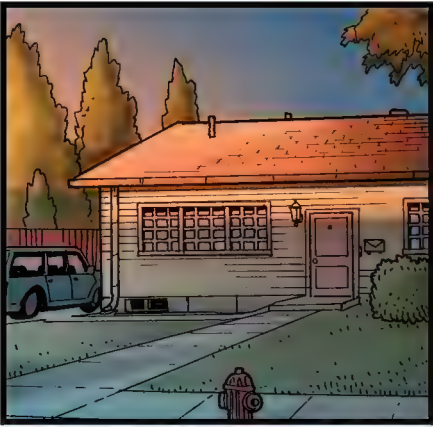


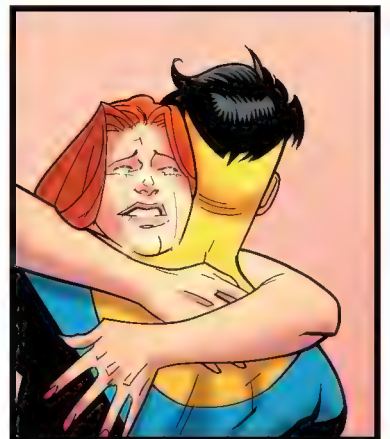
WHO'S PAUL?

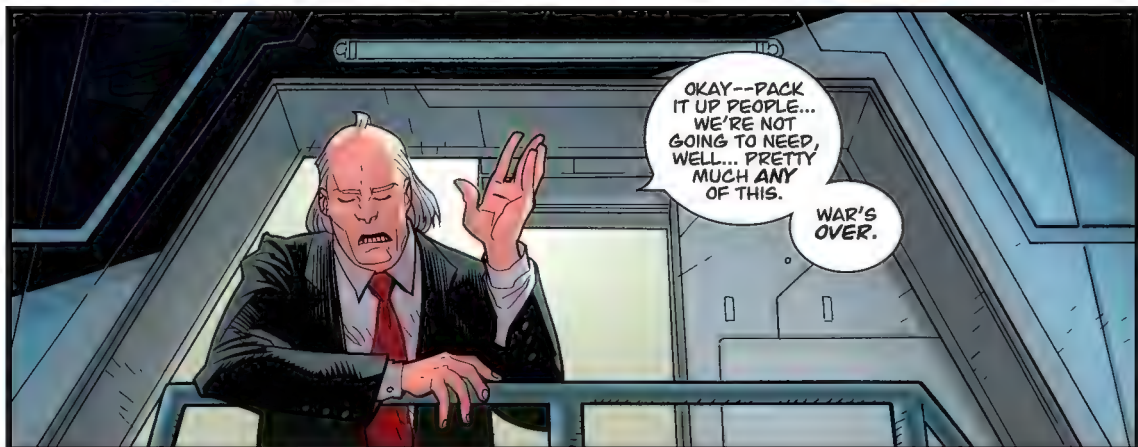
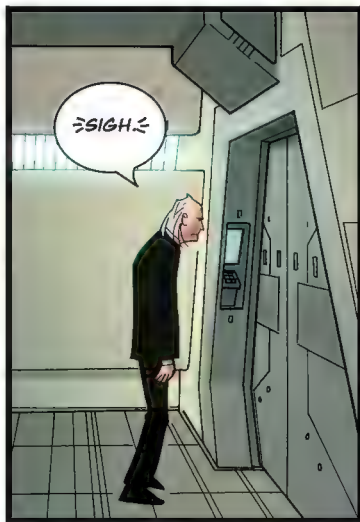
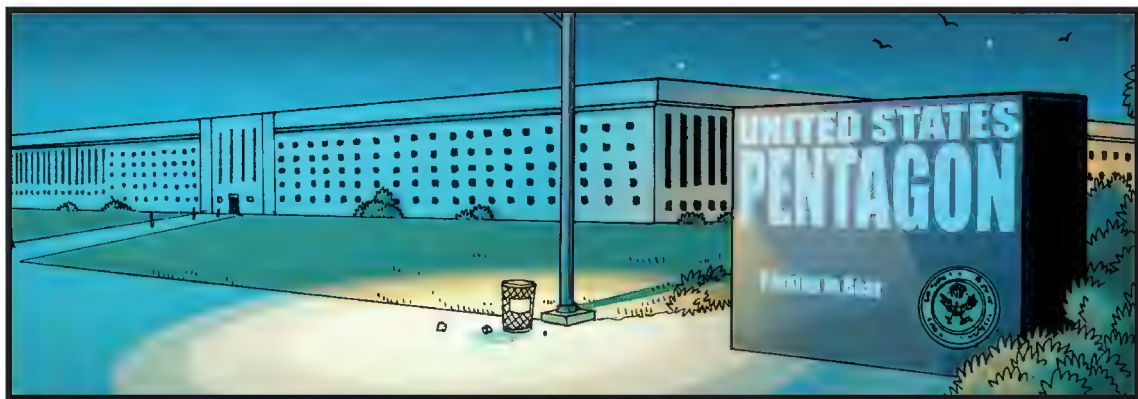






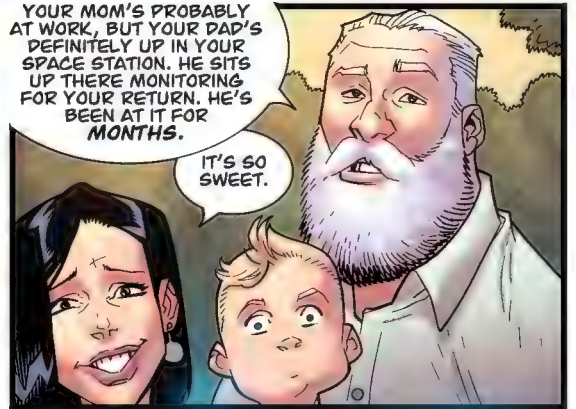
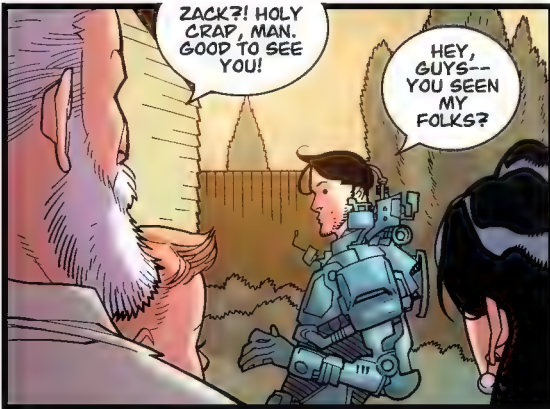
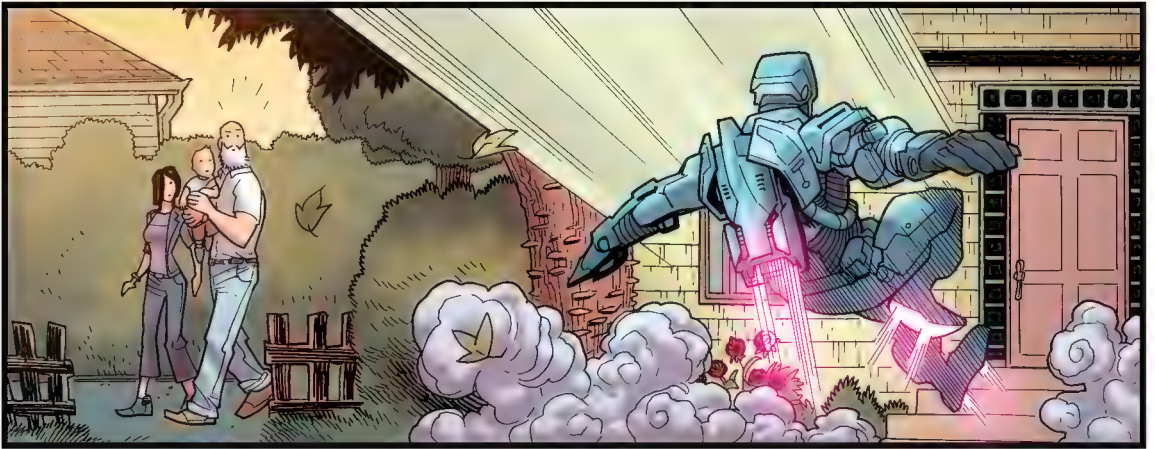


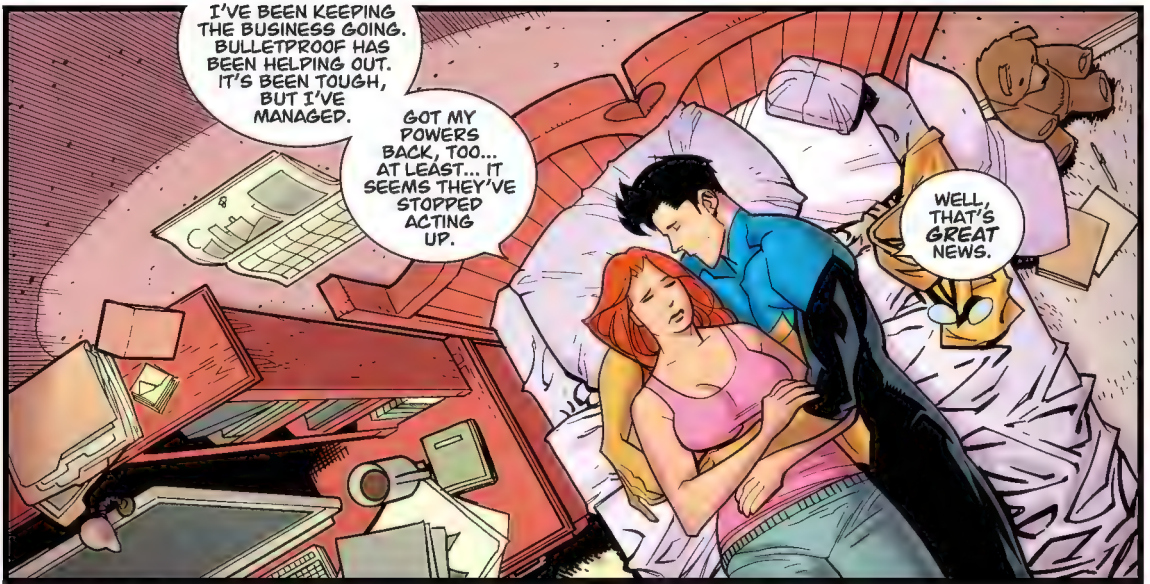






BUMMER.





I'VE BEEN KEEPING THE BUSINESS GOING. BULLETPROOF HAS BEEN HELPING OUT. IT'S BEEN TOUGH, BUT I'VE MANAGED.

GOT MY POWERS BACK, TOO... AT LEAST... IT SEEMS THEY'VE STOPPED ACTING UP.

WELL, THAT'S GREAT NEWS.

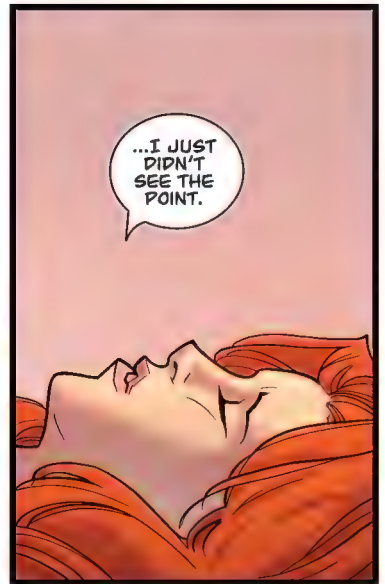


AND YOU'RE STILL LIVING HERE AT HOME?

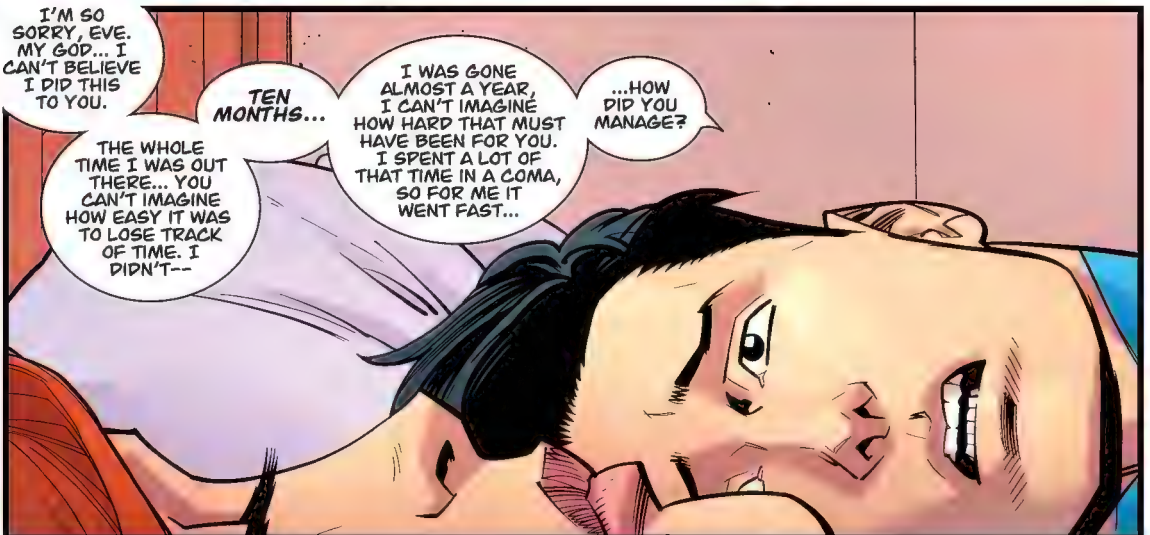


I'VE GOT MORE THAN ENOUGH MONEY SAVED UP TO BUY SOME LAND, AND WITH MY POWERS WORKING AGAIN I COULD BUILD SOMETHING SIMILAR TO WHAT I HAD IN AFRICA...

BUT WITH YOU GONE...



...I JUST DIDN'T SEE THE POINT.



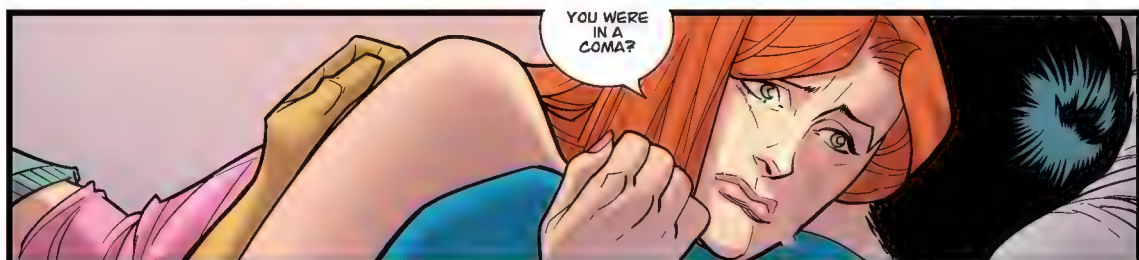
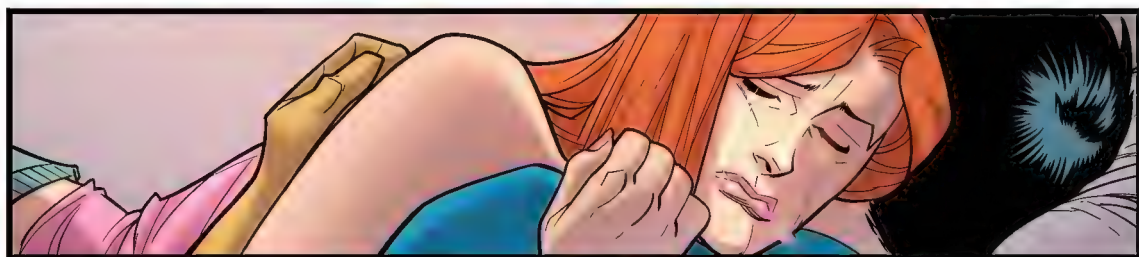
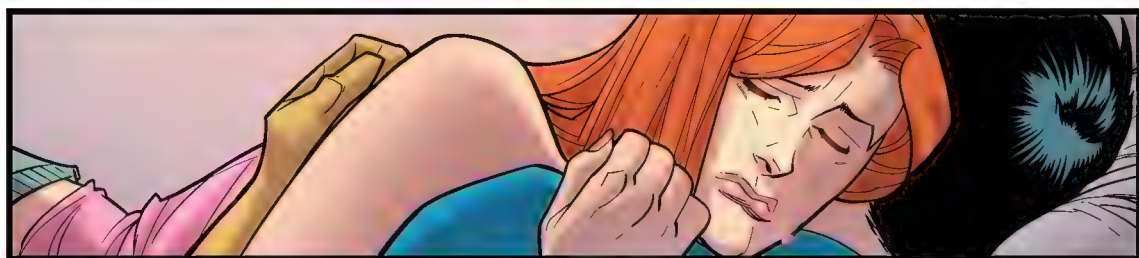
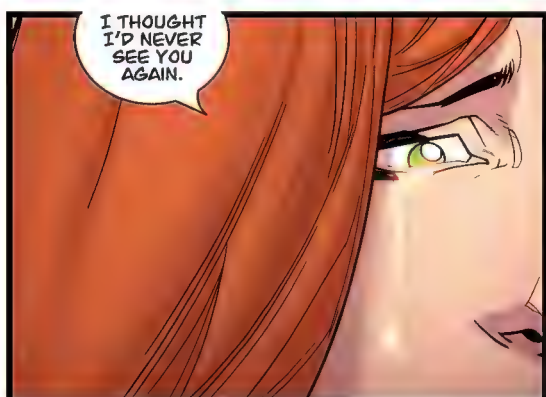
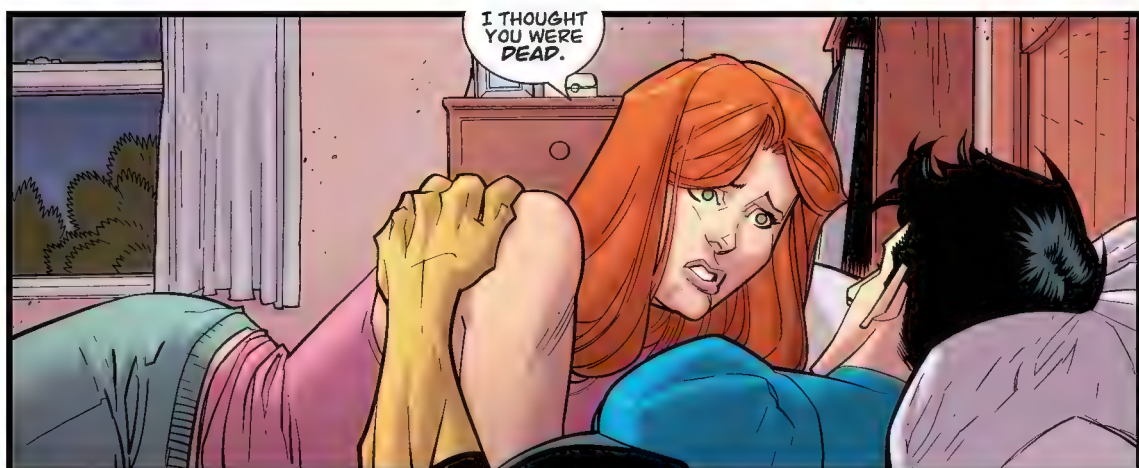
I'M SO SORRY, EVE. MY GOD... I CAN'T BELIEVE I DID THIS TO YOU.

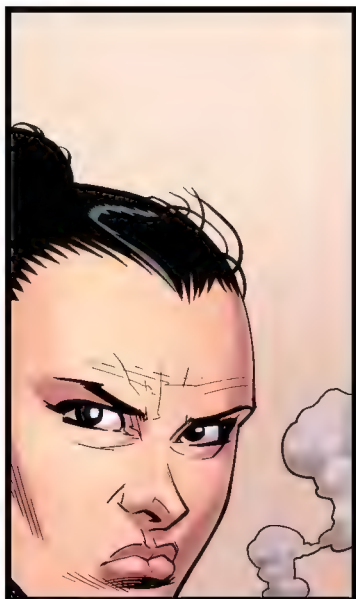
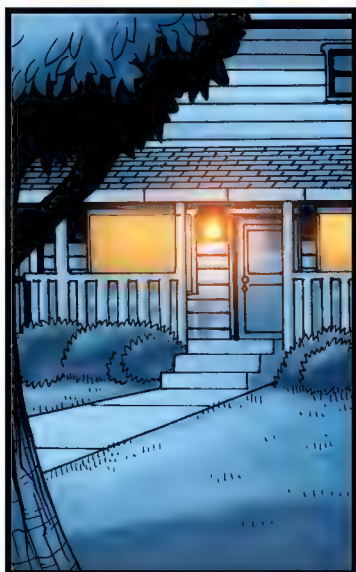
TEN MONTHS...

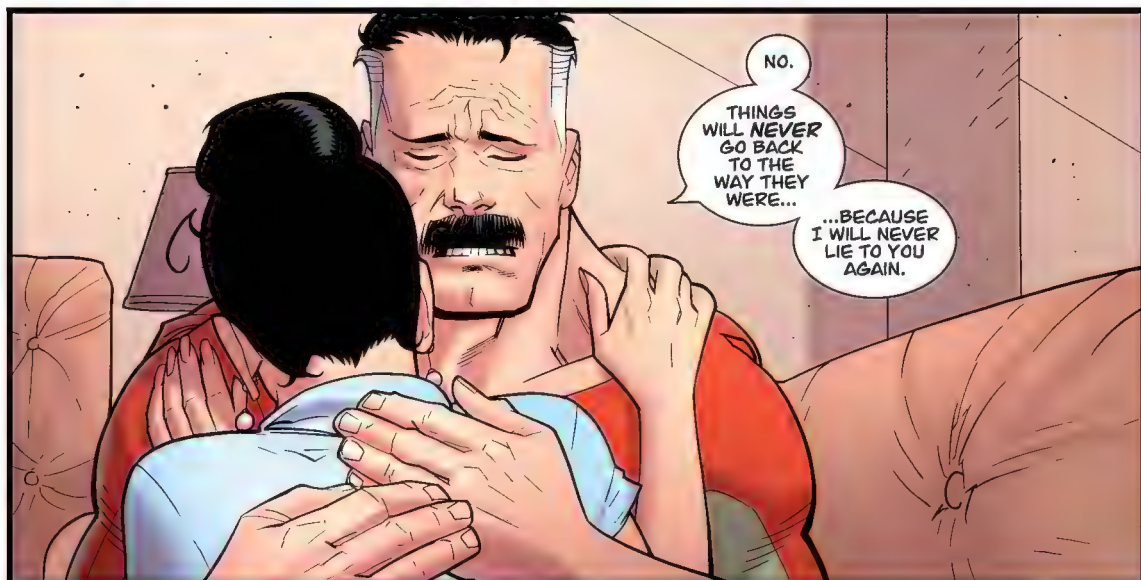
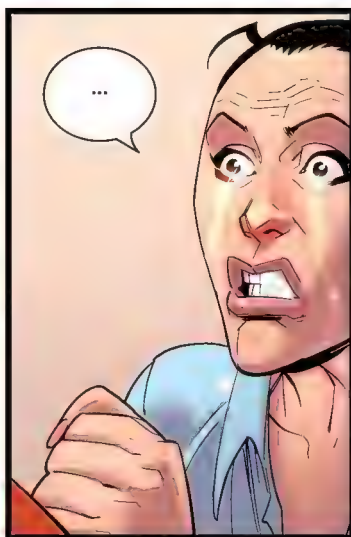
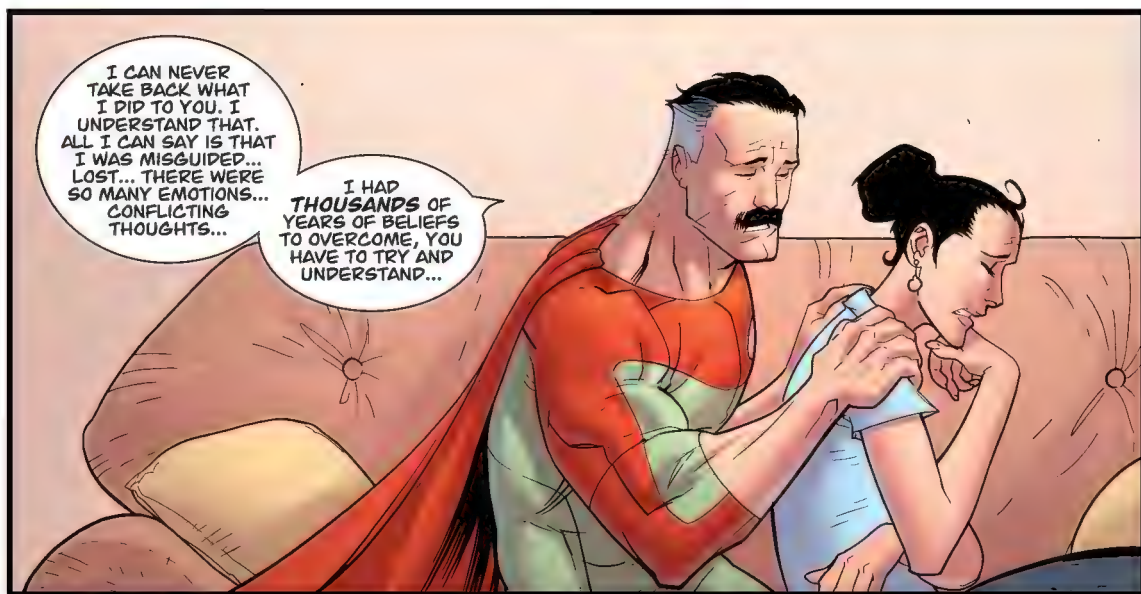
THE WHOLE TIME I WAS OUT THERE... YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HOW EASY IT WAS TO LOSE TRACK OF TIME. I DIDN'T--

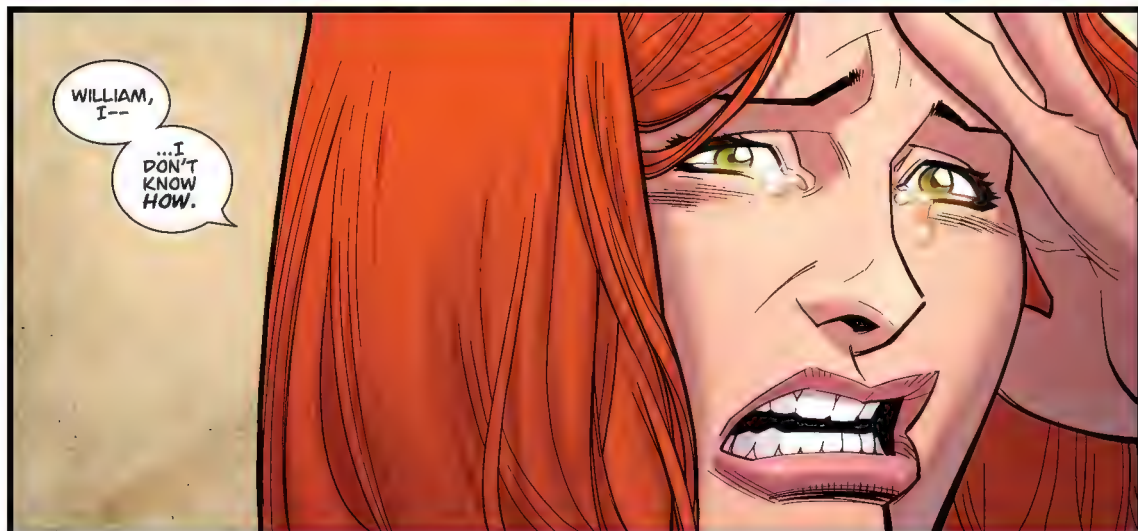
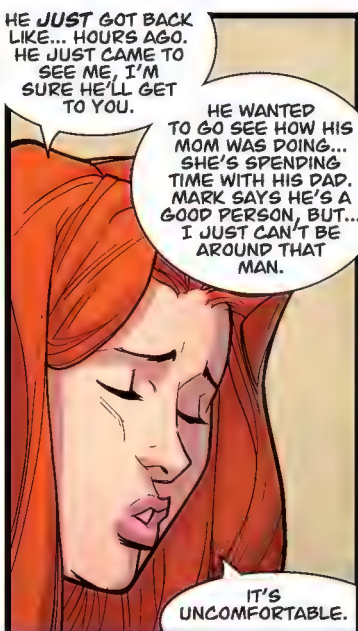
I WAS GONE ALMOST A YEAR, I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW HARD THAT MUST HAVE BEEN FOR YOU. I SPENT A LOT OF THAT TIME IN A COMA, SO FOR ME IT WENT FAST...

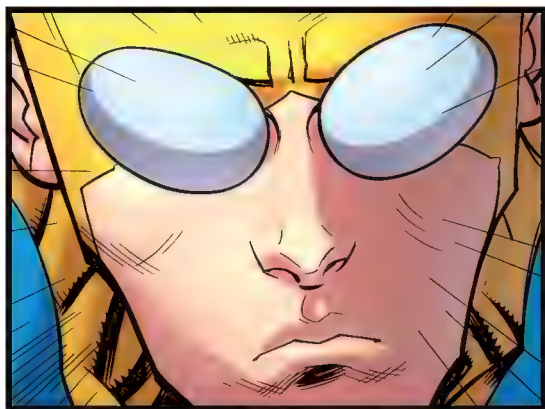
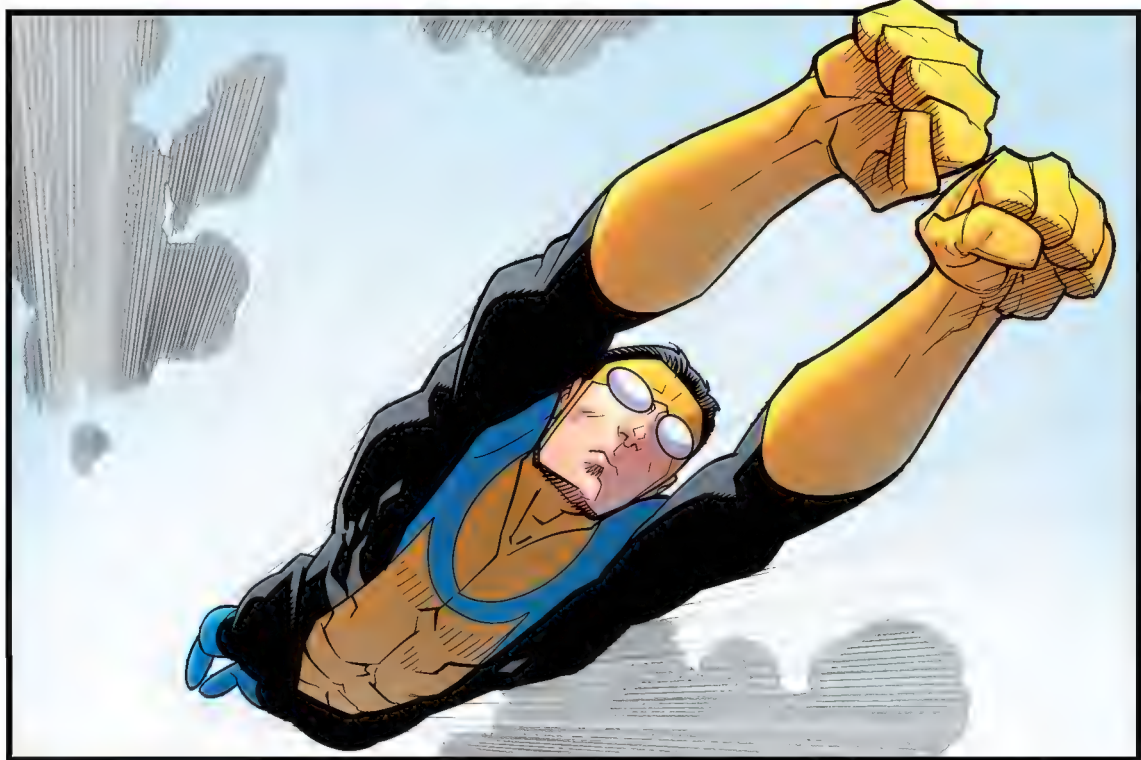
...HOW DID YOU MANAGE?













I KILLED
CONQUEST.

WE
DESTROYED
VILTRUM.

WE ENDED
THE VILTRUM
EMPIRE.

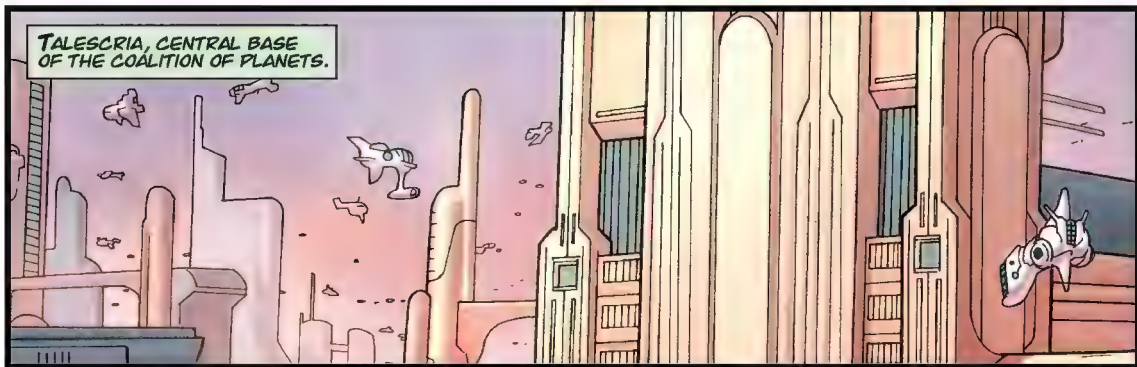
...

BUT
NOW
THEY'RE
HERE...



THE
WAR IS
OVER...

...BUT
WE DIDN'T
WIN.



TALESCRIA, CENTRAL BASE
OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.



GREAT ALLEN, I
APOLOGIZE FOR MY
INTRUSION... BUT
THIS INFO TABLET
WAS DELIVERED
FOR YOU.

IT WAS
MARKED
URGENT.

UH...
THANK
YOU. I'LL
TAKE IT.



ALLEN, IF YOU ARE
READING THIS,
THEN I AM DEAD.

FORGIVE MY ARROGANCE,
BUT IF I HAVE MET MY
END, I CAN ONLY ASSUME
THE WAR AGAINST THE
VILTRUMITES HAS TAKEN A
TURN FOR THE WORSE.

THERE IS A WEAPON
THAT I REGRET TO
INFORM YOU I HAVE
KEPT A SECRET.



THERE IS A SECRET
PASSAGE IN MY
CHAMBER, I HAVE
MARKED ITS LOCATION
ON THIS BLUEPRINT.

AS MY CHOSEN
SUCCESSOR, YOU
SHOULD NOT HAVE
DIFFICULTY
GAINING ACCESS.



I APOLOGIZE THAT
I HAD TO KEEP THIS
SECRET, BUT WITH
VILTRUMITES AS OUR
ALLIES, I HAD TO
CONSIDER THIS AS
A LAST RESORT.



THE SCOURGE VIRUS.

THE VIRUS THAT
RAVAGED THE
VILTRUMITE
POPULATION...
NEARLY KILLED
THEM ALL.

THIS IS A STRONGER
STRAIN, PERFECTED...
IT WILL NOT FAIL
THIS TIME.

IF THE WAR EFFORT APPEARS
LOST, I URGE YOU TO USE IT...
IGNORE YOUR ATTACHMENT
TO OUR VILTRUMITE ALLIES.



FOR THE GOOD OF
THE UNIVERSE.

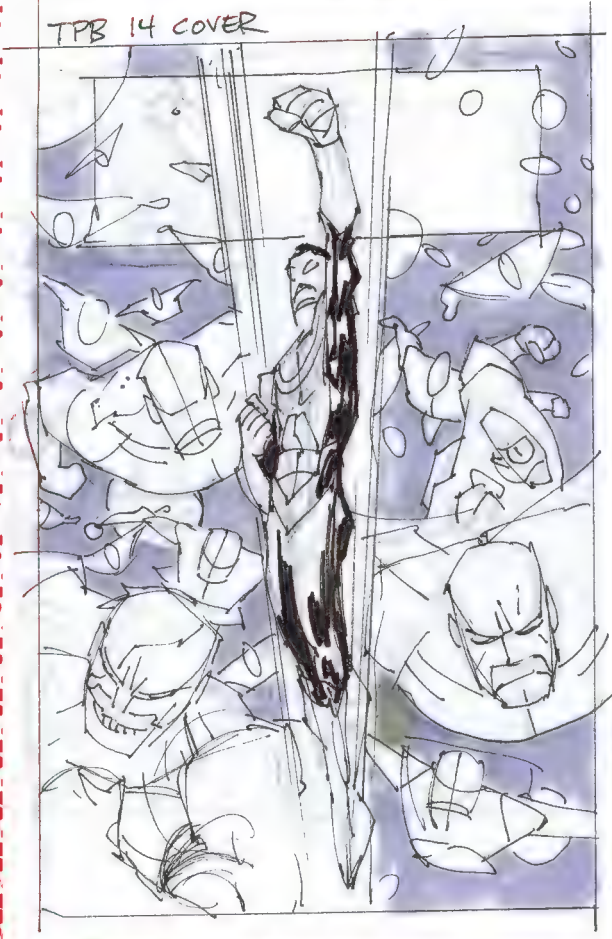
ERADICATE ALL
VILTRUM LIFE...
FOREVER.

WHATEVER YOU DO,
MAKE CERTAIN THAT
I DID NOT DIE IN VAIN.
-THAEDUS.



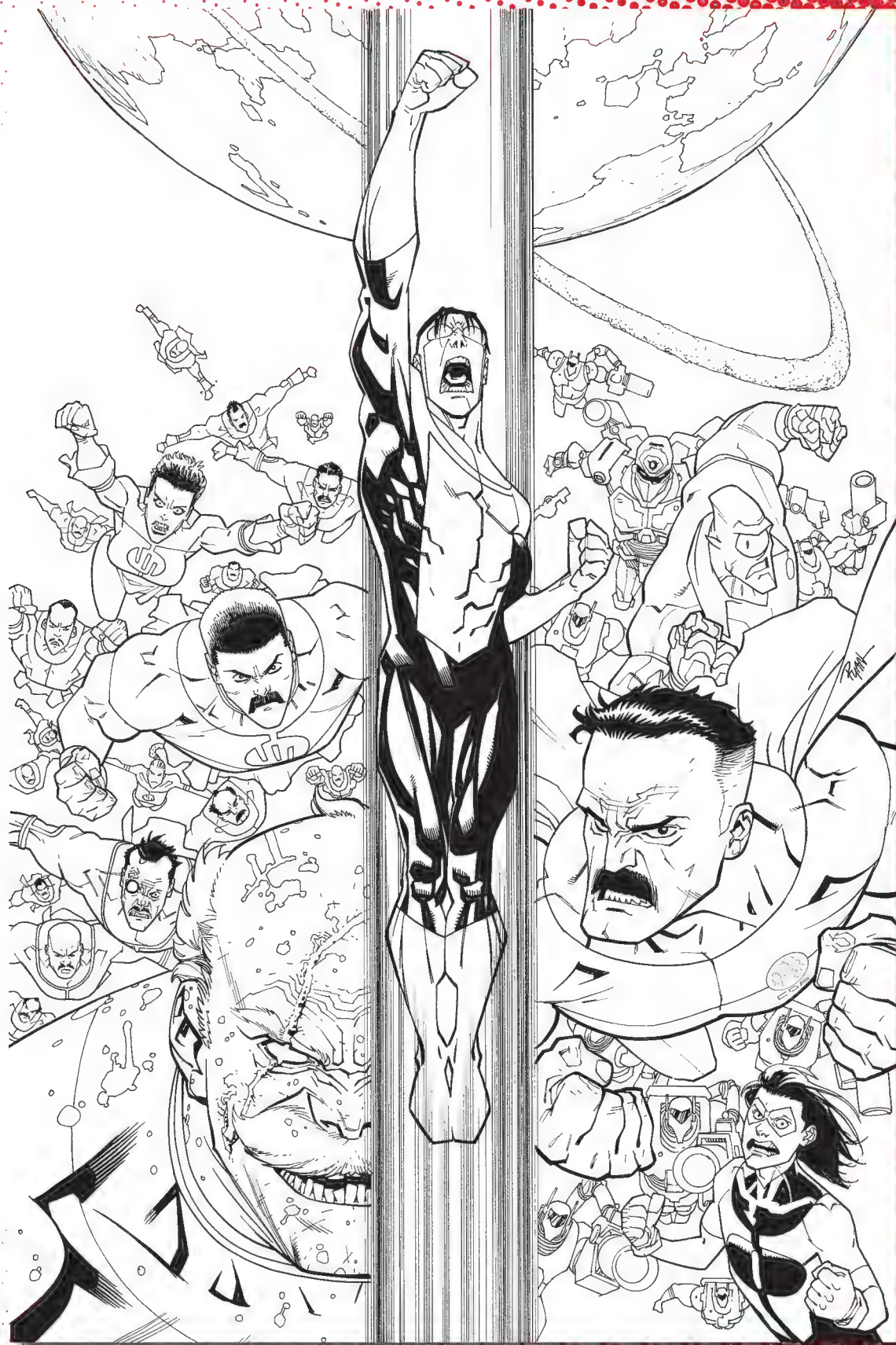


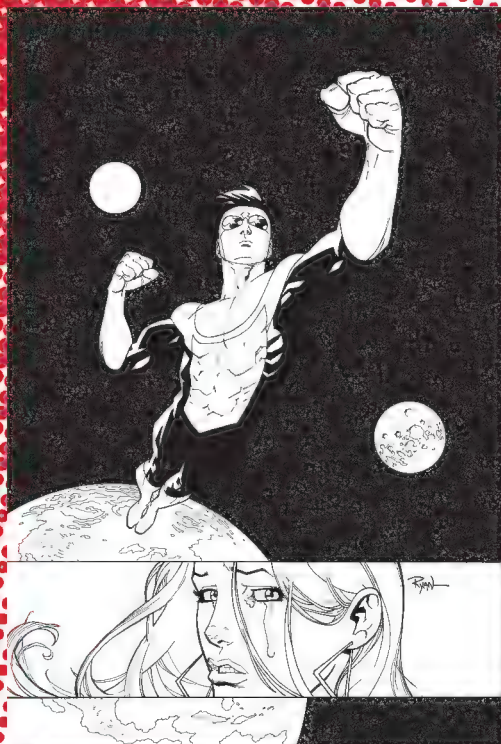
TPB 14 COVER



ROBERT KIRKMAN: The volume 14 TPB cover--yowza, Ryan Ottley does it again. I must say, I really love the TPB covers for this series--they're always cool. Ryan always does a great job of keeping the style consistent while also keeping it fresh and original from volume to volume and the art is always just top notch. I think Ryan really shines on these covers; he's so great, and... what--did you expect this commentary to be something other than me complimenting Ryan? Sorry.

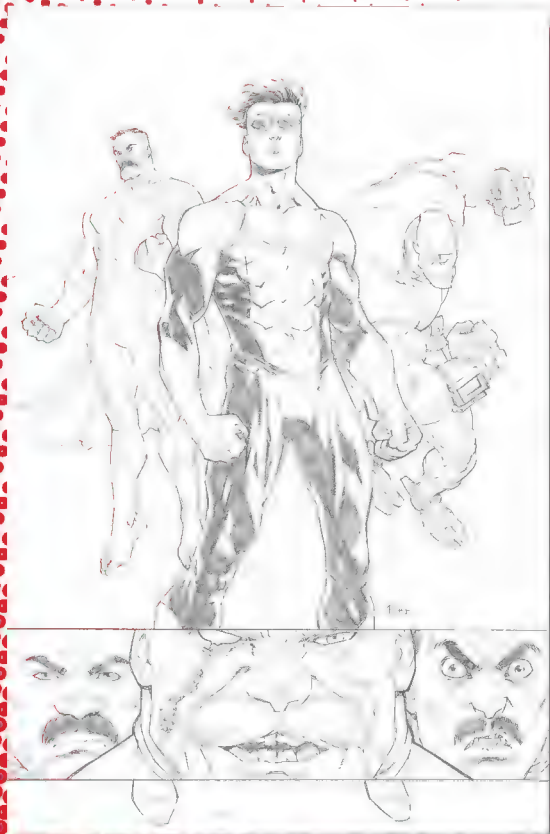
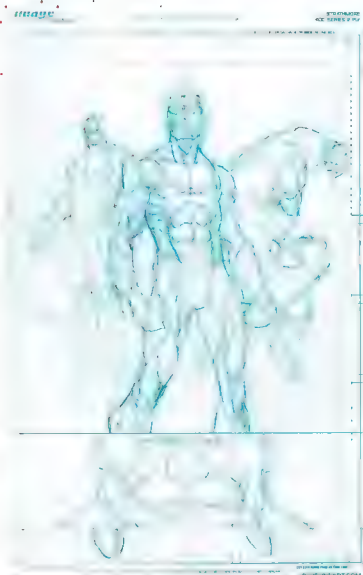
RYAN OTTLEY: *Never apologize for complimenting me. It's offensive. Now apologize for apologizing. But thank you, this cover has been said to be Invincible flying up a waterfall which would be awesome if he was. Space waterfall! In my defense, it does look more like water in the colors, something I didn't notice. But oh well, the colors are awesome, FCO rocks! And I normally don't print my prelim "thinking" pages because they are normally even less coherent than what you see here. This has enough where you can see some of my thought process behind the layout of the cover. Those come first, then the thumbnail sketch, then layouts, pencils, and inks! Comics!*





KIRKMAN: The covers for issue 71 and 72. For the Viltrumite War storyline (which allowed us to use the title of my favorite sitcom ever for the name of this TPB) I really wanted to do some kind of unified cover design that would make the whole story arc link together visually. So I stole a page from our TPB cover designs and suggested to Ryan that we slap a wide panel across the bottom of all the covers and show two scenes per cover instead of one. And of course Ryan took the idea and spun it into gold.

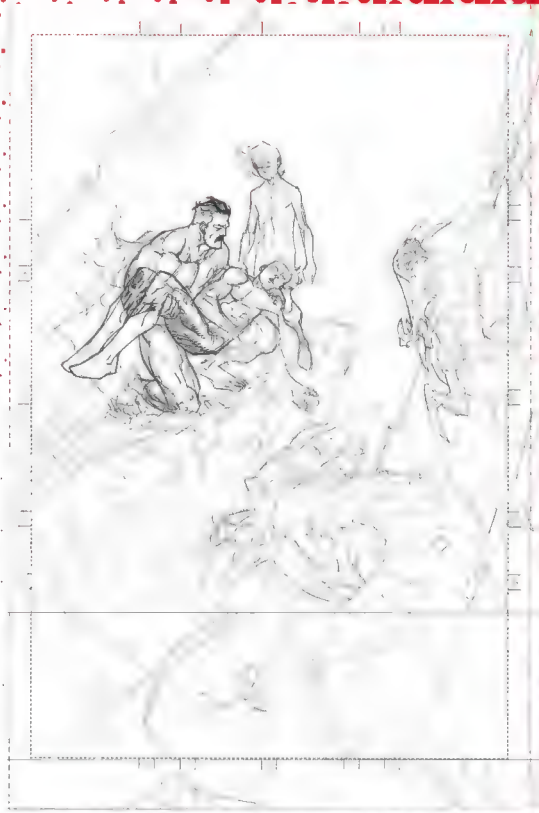
OTTLEY: The Viltrumite War arc! Funniest sitcom ever. The wide panel made laying out a cover even more of a challenge since I had to pay attention to where I place the main image along with the panel. Fun stuff. And for issue 72 cover, I got one of my favorite inkers to ink it, Dexter Vines. Thanks, Dexter!





KIRKMAN: The cover to issue 73, you can't go wrong with having your main character near death on a cover. Boy, do we love going to that well. It always looks so cool!

OTTLEY: *You look cool.*





KIRKMAN: I really wanted to have one of those Doctor Doom-style, big villain with an outstretched hand lording over our heroes type cover. The kind that Erik Larsen does so well. Great shot of Anissa in the wide panel, too. Gotta say, this cover is sweet, but it's really kind of impossible to color well and make it not look like a rainbow. I really have to give FCO credit for being able to make this cover look so good in color. That guy's got talent.

OTTLEY: Yeah, FCO really did a great job, it was a tough one to handle and he nailed it. I think this is where the Freddy Mercury comments REALLY started rolling in. I still get asked at conventions if he was based on him. I need to put up a sign or something with a giant NO on it that I can point at when people ask. But hey, Cory designed Thragg, so we should really ask him. Where is Cory? CORY! Hey there, was Thragg based on the singer for Queen?

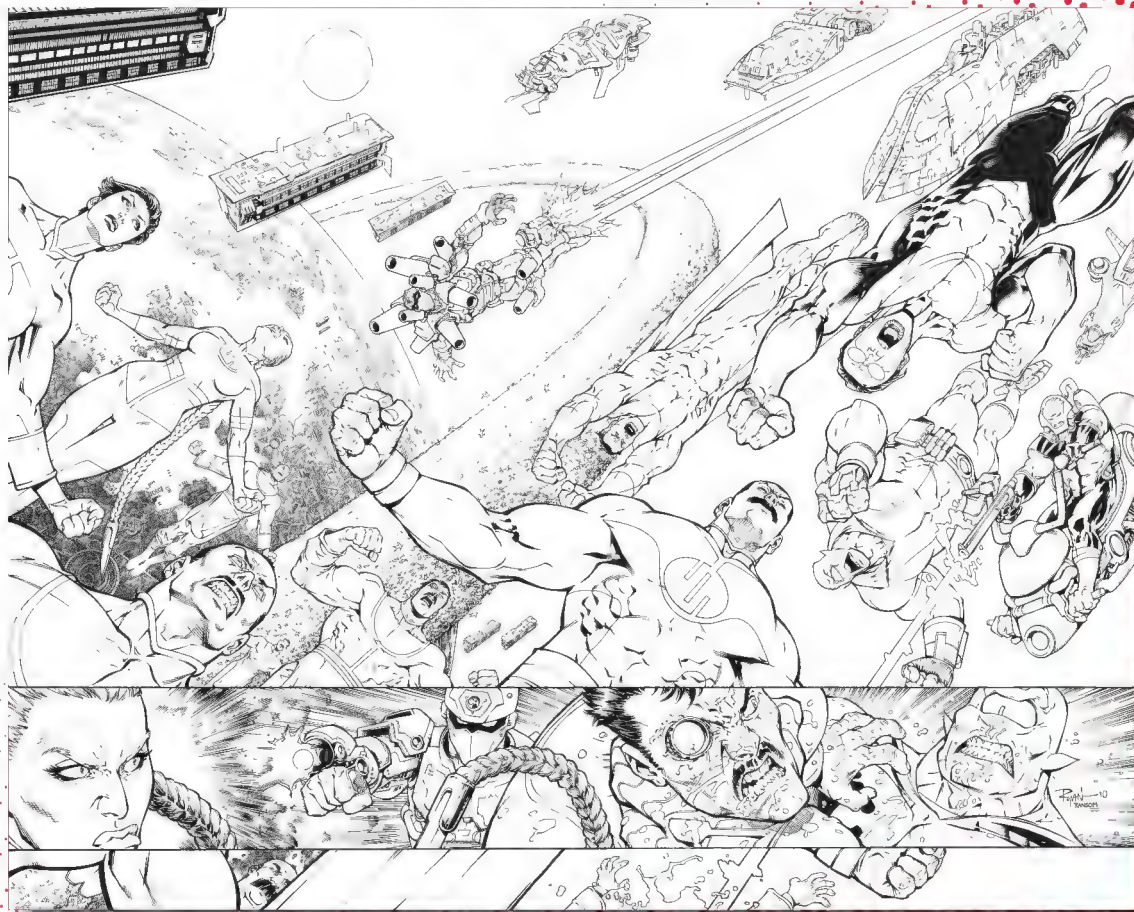
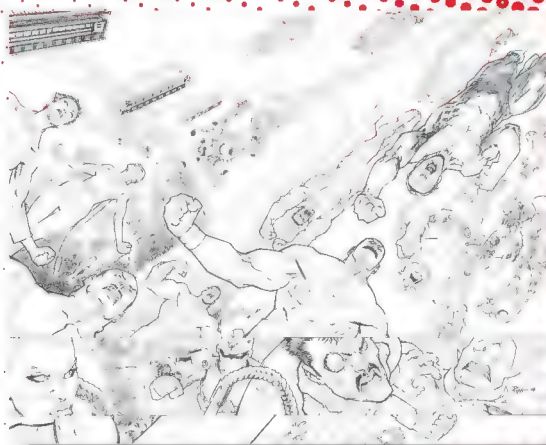
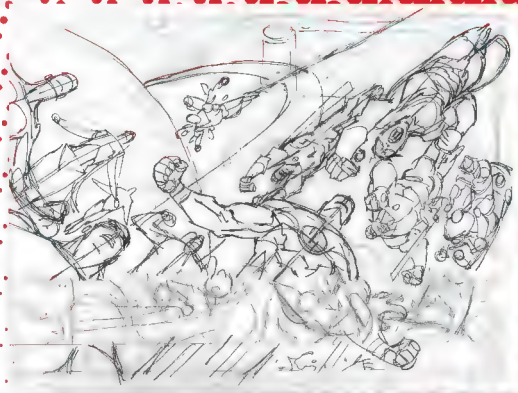
CORY WALKER: No! Are you kidding?!

OTTLEY: I love you, Cory.



KIRKMAN: So for the cover of issue 75, we decided to do something special. Wraparound covers are fun, right? And we wanted to do the whole bad guys on one side, good guys on the other thing--but when you do that as a wraparound sometimes it makes the covers pretty bland when you look at them in halves. The front half could have just been Invincible and the rest looking really angrily over at the book next to it on the stack. That's not very friendly. Eventually Ryan came up with a layout that worked! Whew!

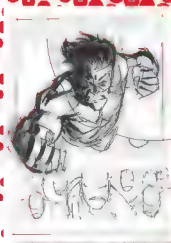
OTTLEY: Yeah, at first I was going for the quicker version which was just bad guys on one side, good on the other. It was a bit bland and it's been done to death by other companies. But we wanted this cover to shine so I chose a much harder layout but it was a lot of fun squeezing in the planet and ring of bodies, space ships, and all that fun stuff. Took more time, but was worth it. I normally ink my own covers but I really needed to get going on the issue and I was having fun getting others to ink a couple covers so I thought I'd ask Mike Ransom Getty, artist of *Guarding the Globe* to ink this for me. The guy is master with that brush! Thanks, Ransom!





KIRKMAN: Another thing I wanted to do in commemoration of the anniversary 75th issue was have a cool redraw of the first issue's cover. I thought it would be a cool thing to show the differences in the book from then to now by having the image redrawn. We actually gave this variant cover away free to retailers as a thank you for all the support they've given this title over the years. And then there's the cover to 76--ouch--poor Invincible!

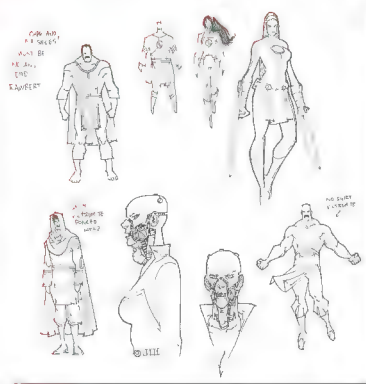
OTTLEY: I really need to pick up writing. I'd love to say "Hey for this month's issue 75 spectacular you need to draw a double-page cover with everyone on it, an issue the size of TWO issues with more figures per page than you've ever drawn before. OH, and a variant cover, and do it all in a month, GO!" And then I would just sit back and laugh.



KIRKMAN: The covers for issues 77 and 78--what a cool couple of covers. I love the issue 77 cover. I really wanted to have a cover that would mislead audiences into thinking there was going to be a knock-down-drag-out fight on Earth between Invincible and the Vitrumites! I love setting fans up for a let down. On the cover to 78, hot damn can Ryan draw clouds or what? And the coloring on this cover is just amazing.

OTTLEY: That 77 cover was inked by none other than the awesome Tim Townsend. It was so great to work with another one of my favorite inkers of all time. I'm really happy with how the cover turned out. The panel for the cover to 78 was difficult to compose because I needed to fit them in with a kissing close-up, but that panel was hard to work around so it looks kind of funny--like I'm censoring Eve's butt or something. I apologize to all of you fans of Eve's bum.





KIRKMAN: If there's one shortcoming I can admit to in this Viltrumite War storyline... it's that I wanted to focus on the Viltrumites much more... I wanted to show things from their side from time to time, really get into the nuts and bolts of their society and really develop the personalities of Viltrumites like Anissa and Kregg and Thragg and others... but I just ran out of room. Ryan did some cool Viltrumite designs though...

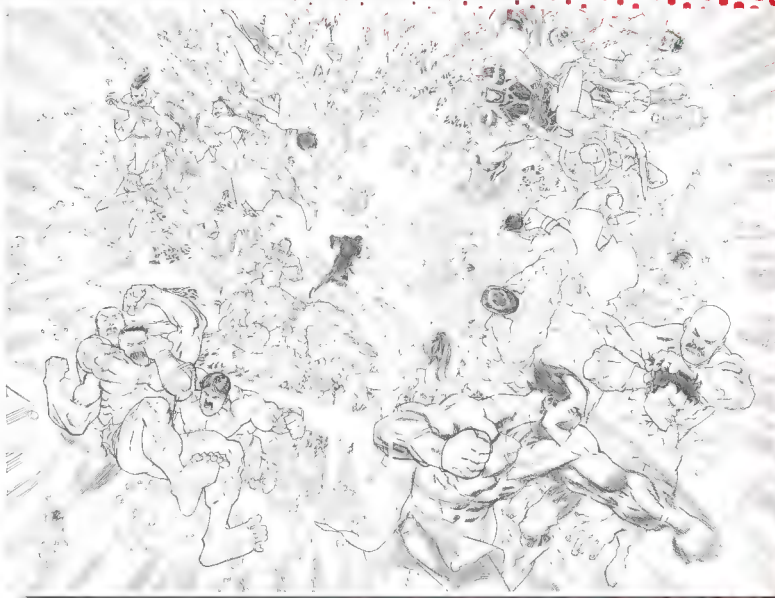
OTTLEY: Luckily we still have hundreds more issues in front of us so you can still work out all those nuts and bolts. We got time, and TONS of room! Let's do this. I know I would LOVE to see/draw more Viltrumite stories.

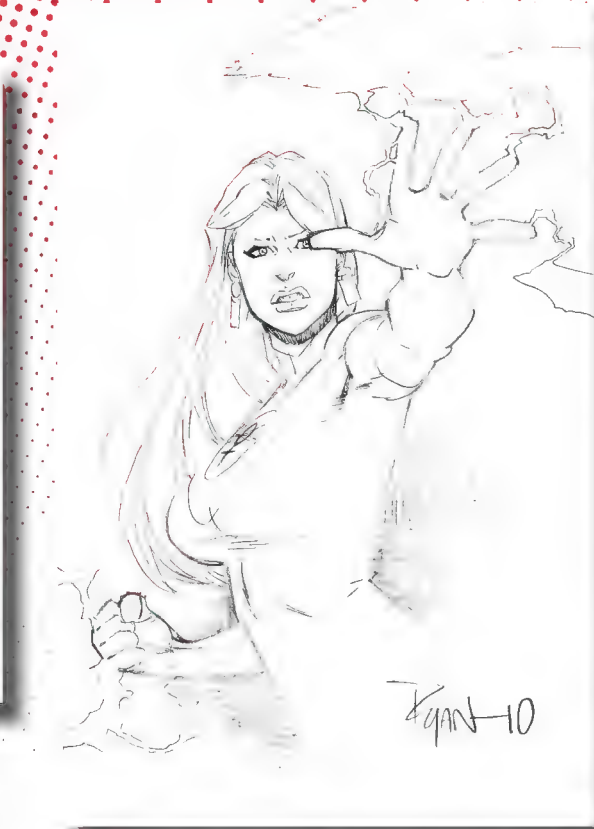




KIRKMAN: This series ran pretty late during this storyline. We hit a point where we either had to start taking shortcuts or just let the schedule go off the rails... I said schedule be damned, this is a story we've been building to for years, let's do it right. So that's why there are so many two-page spreads like the ones you see on this page... AMAZING.

OTTLEY: Issue 75 alone took 2 months to draw. Which makes sense because it was the size of two issues, and of course packed with so many war scenes. I remember you had this idea for a while, for me to draw 4 double-page spreads. I thought you were just exaggerating. Funny thing is, you weren't, and it ended up being 6. But I agree, schedule be damned. I'm happy with how it turned out! Sometimes you gotta do an epic issue even if it's late.





KIRKMAN: Find Ryan at a convention--get awesome sketches like the ones pictured on this page.





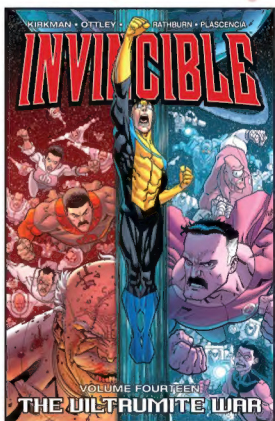
KIRKMAN: Or even awesome sketches like these. Lord... Ryan, I'm sorry for all the zombie Invincibles you have to draw at these conventions. I feel like that's my fault.

OTTLEY: It is your fault. But you know I love drawing zombies, right? So I'm totally fine with them. You ever need another *Walking Dead* back-up story you know where to find me. ;)

KIRKMAN: That's it for us folks, thanks for buying!

OTTLEY: Thank you all! And thanks to Robert for being an awesome writer, co-worker, and friend. Same to Cliff and FCO, thanks for making me look pretty. I got the coolest job.

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